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Notes for reflection

Cecilia Olea

The Articulación Feminista Marcosur defines itself as a political feminist current. It is integrated by feminist organizations of Latin America who decided to work together after attending the IV Women's World Conference.

From the feminist perspective, we intend to influence the construction of political processes to widen citizen exercise and deepen democracy. We believe that the dialogue with other social movements is the axis for strengthening alliances committed to new forms of doing politics.

Starting Point

We conceptualize the feminism we seek to build as a political voice committed to the construction of democratic systems. We conceive democracy as a political South that expands, redefines and radicalizes the systems of participation, representation and strengthening of the public space as an agora for the formulation of proposals and the furtherance of agreements. We are sure that the link between the public and the private space has strong channels of communication that need to redefine the traditional frames of their own boundaries. From the 70s, "The private is political" was the motto of the feminism imaginary; it revealed the responsibility and complicity of the public power on gender oppressions evidenced within the domestic space thus demonstrating the continuance of patriarchal sexual arrangements in the public and the private.

The struggles against military dictatorships in our region were part of the spaces of resistance where we strived for the restitution of the civil power. We demand that the return of democracy entails the expansion of citizenship to traditionally invisibilized sectors, as we women are.

The process of democracy restitution brought back the right to choose and the legal recognition of women's participation in decision-making spaces; likewise, the context within which it was developed has shown alarming limits. The gap between those who have more and those who have less has enlarged despite the sustainability of economic growth. The formerly considered inalienable social, economic and cultural rights have witnessed the crack of their supporting legal systems.

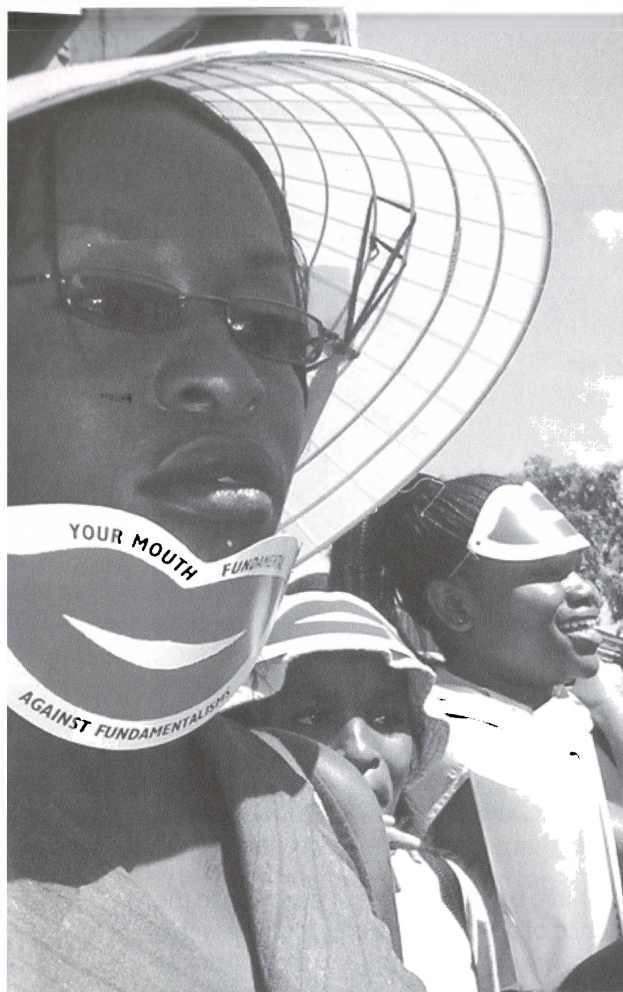


The political representation systems have been inflexible in adapting to the challenges generated by the emergence of new and ancient identities within the public field. The demands from players organized around the policies of the body, those who are organized around racial and ethnic identity, those who demand the convergence of the rights of the people and the environment where they develop had little impact on the programmatic formulations of the mediation instances between the society and the State.

There are also collective actions fostered by organized players who question the institutional and social arrangements. How and from where can we promote the dialogue among practices of resistance against exclusions and how can we create new grammars within those contents devoted to changes? How to construe our practice in order for it to contribute to design new concepts, strategies and imaginaries of coexistence? How do the diverse demands from the identities find a confluence course? How can we build subjectivities that perceive and incorporate disagreements in their political shapes and contents?

The questions cited above are some of the discomforts that, as a political school of thought, lead us to action and reflection. To act with the mind set on here and now, and also as a way to transform imaginaries and reflect about how to establish the boundaries and territories where to meet with others.

Feminism is the identity where we start from, and, as expressed by Betânia Ávila "(feminism) is not a movement that orders, centralizes and defines models to be followed. On the contrary, it is an ever-opening and expanding movement, sometimes decisively (...) It is "a movement that wants to



reinvent and radicalize the political and social democracy". It is from this framework that we want to conceptualize the assumptions from which the political and theoretical proposals and the coincidences and dissents are raised.

Globalization

Some people affirm that the historical roots of globalization come from the travels of the Phoenician and the Chinese peoples around the world trying to create an exchange of cultures through trade. Others believe that globalization is marked by the arrival of Europeans to our continent. The interesting debates about its historical roots lead us to a world full of questions and travels through time. Chineses, Phoenicians, Jesuits or the

Internet, what we want is to situate ourselves in the last decades of this process.

Proximity, interconnections, denationalization of capitals and markets are a sign that produces new economic conditions and new cultural arrangements, blurring the boundaries for the exercise and restriction of rights while boosting the generation of new resistances.

The time and space categories have gained unprecedented contents. Communication in real time draws humanity together furthering immediate coincidence and dissident responses in view of the existing power structure. The globalization process we are witnessing is concurrent with the neoliberal model, which is presented as the only approach to the political, economic and institutional arrangements. This entailed placing the market as the axis of relations among the people: now more than ever what you are depends on what you have and what you consume.

Neoliberalism has hindered more than three quarters of the population from the exercise of its rights, while the globalization context of communications leads the excluded to participate in events within a scenario



presented as global. The tension between the local and the global has political, economic, conceptual and emotional connotations. As stated by Bauman: "To be local in a globalized world is a sign of social destitution and degradation. Disadvantages of a localized existence became accentuated by the fact that public spaces are beyond their grasp; therefore, localities lose their capacity to generate and negotiate value. They progressively depend on actions that grant and construe value, actions on which no control is exercised ..., no matter what globalized intellectuals say - with their communitarist dreams/consolations".

The generation of information appears within a power structure that presents the excluded as responsible for their own exclusion. Another dimension of neoliberalism with devastating effects is the monetarization of relationships - yet there is little consciousness about its effects. Considering the value of market as a space of exchange and of monetarization as a way to simplify relationships within the market, mercantilism exacerbation leads to the erosion of the moral and ethical dimensions of relations among people, undermining the bonds and degrading them to the purchasing power.

In neoliberalism, institutions acquire a life of their own regardless of the duties and services offered by them. This inflexibility and distance excludes the individual and, in addition, symbolically presents the institutions as guided by natural laws, in other words: they cannot be intervened or modified. In turn, State privatization has deteriorated one of its main functions: to be the common referent from which and before which demands are posed, i.e. interests are articulated.

The current life rhythm leaves no time (we have to produce) or space (they are privatized) left for interpersonal communication. This impairs our imaginary, isolates us, and makes us feel that we speak a different language from the rest.

Concurrently, there were created global resistances, boundary-crossing demands, collective actions that interconnect their dissidence. These actions have a stimulating political impact on the generation of broader imaginaries for political action. Initiatives as the post-neoliberal agenda, the dialogues of the peoples and the World Social Forum are some of the organized expressions devoted to the creation of new forms of doing politics in new scenarios.



Fundamentalisms

The collapse of the States of the so-called communist system - formerly strong, powerful and almost invincible – gave visibility to referents for the construction of identities that were so far concealed. Within the post-bipolar scenario, the process of configuration of new demands, political individuals and nations, gave rise to intransigent proposals that were rapidly read from the Occidental doctrine as fundamentalisms.

The fundamentalism we are currently experiencing is not only manifested in the establishment of bonds between religious institutions and the State; the neoliberal doctrine also appears as the only possible alternative for the economic, social and political development of nations, or, in other words, of the world. The introduction of neoliberalism and self-regulated market as the only probability deprives us of one of the achievements promised by the modern project: the possibility to choose the life project we want to build and live.

Resistance to fundamentalisms may become a sphere to articulate different resistances in the political, economic and cultural level. The campaign "Your mouth fundamental against fundamentalisms" expresses the proposal of having a symbolic common space from which to reflect and build alternative political agreements.

Reflecting on our practices

The political arrangements we want to reach are expected to strengthen a social imaginary that recognizes and incorporates the dimension of subjectivity in the construction of social, cultural and economic practices. Today, more than ever, subjectivity appears visible in the dispute of meanings of the political and social arenas.

The Articulación Feminista Marcosur has documented and reflected about the construction of a feminist movement from the process of drafting the political agenda in local, regional and global spaces, within the framework of the KIC project supported by OXFAM/NOVIB. From different negotiation and advocacy strategies there arises the way to establish feminist political individuals who try to place their agenda in institutional structures, dialogue with peers from an approach that strengthens citizenship, justice and democracy.

a) Global scenarios

The Feminist Dialogues process has been documented. It was an initiative stemmed from the need to articulate strategies among feminists within the World Social Forum (WSF). In 2003, in Porto Alegre, the AFM called a meeting among the networks participating in the WSF with the intention of exchanging information on the actions carried out in the WSF. As a result of that meeting, we had an evaluation and exchange meeting: "under the

shade of a tree” (becoming emblematic), where it was agreed to hold a feminist meeting before the WSF. This meeting led to the first Feminist Dialogues (Mumbai, January, 2004).

The dialogues constitute a space for encounter, reflection and action among feminists from different continents. The actual process of the Dialogues has transcended the original purpose of bearing an influence on the WSF and has been the scenario of theoretical-political reflections about the interpretative frames of feminist action in a global arena. Radical democracy and/or feminist democracy; links between militarism and neoliberal policies; the contents of fundamentalisms in the political, the economic and the social; Can we talk about fundamentalism in the economic and the political, or just in the religious?; these have been some of the concepts that accompanied the reflections and passionate debates.

The management of feminisms has been concerned with the inclusion of other expressions of feminisms, of young leaders, and with an inclusive, democratic and horizontal management of those feminisms.

One of the tangible outcomes of the dialogues was the inclusion of the struggle against fundamentalisms in the agenda of the WSF; there were other unexpected outcomes, such as the possibility of fostering encounters among feminists from Africa and Latin America and among young feminists attending the WSF. Another substantial result – as shown by the slogans of the opening demonstrations in the WSF - was the greater visibility of the feminist presence within the WSF.

A space for political reflection – managed mainly by Southern feminists - outside the frames of global institutions as the UN, is one of the characteristics of this space that has strengthened the leaderships within the global scenario. The exchange of experiences in the framework of conceptual reflections has enriched female leaders who participate of the WSF.

This space could be developed and sustained thanks to the political will and activism of its promoters, evidencing the commitment of leaders and their organizations. At the same time, the above represents its major weakness, as the challenges related to deepening reflections, incorporating young and new leaders, and developing a more efficient action requires the allocation of larger financial resources and the assignment of an ad hoc team.

b) Regional scenarios

Advocacy in MERCOSUR integration process has been documented. Regional integration is an increasingly strong tendency that became the scenario for the dispute of senses of social and economic development policies. The social agenda is





precisely one of the deficits of these processes. The dimensions of citizenship, education and work are blurred, and, their commercial side is emphasized. The advocacy process is framed in the context of construction of a gender agenda within the MERCOSUR.

As part of that process, there have been many meetings of spaces to deal with the contents of the agenda, both of the institution itself and of the social movements involved.

Among the most relevant issues, it was decided to comparatively document the legislative frames of the domestic workers' situation in the MERCOSUR countries. The publication reports on the discrimination of people, mostly women, developing this economic activity, which facilitates the advocacy before the Ministries of Labor and Social Security of the different countries and, at the same time, provides organized domestic workers with an instrument of negotiation.

Simultaneously, the documented evidence helped to connect this issue to the increasing migration of Southern women to Northern countries to work in private homes, a socioeconomic phenomenon typical of globalization and the neoliberal context.

This experience leaves a set of learnings: it shows us the effectiveness of drafting specific proposals with documentary soundness for advocacy; it determines the path to follow in the transition from the elaboration of a political stance to a concrete action; it guides us on the way to effectively connect knowledge production to real life changes, in this case of women, by creating a praxis where female players with different social backgrounds (academicians, feminist activists, union leaders) may build a common grammar.

c) Local scenarios

The advocacy process for the elaboration of a new Constitution in Bolivia is another documented practice. Feminist organizations joined forces with the objective of drafting proposals to be negotiated in the Constituent Assembly process. National consultations among women's organizations at the national level were carried out, and a document was prepared containing the proposals aimed at guaranteeing women's rights in the new Constitution. Then came the negotiation of the proposal before the relevant commissions. The consultation and elaboration action gave prominence to the social players involved, who in this case are the women. Yet, the strong point of the proposal was presented as a weakness in the negotiation.

Another documented practice is the process of construction of the Brazilian Women's Articulation (AMB). The AMB constitutes an agora for feminist action in Brazil; very few countries of Latin America have had this kind of experience. The document deals with the self-organization and political action dynamics in its construction and in the elaboration of the agenda.

The procedures used to build a democratic and inclusive space that incorporates organized and individual players has been complex and has even generated tensions in terms of leadership and agendas approach. One of the important dimensions of this experience is that it was constituted from the organizational and political fabric created in its participation in the IV Women's World Conference.

The management experience of the radio station Radio Tierra in Chile is one more documented practice. This radio station is the only one managed from a feminist organization. The document describes the management process of the radio station and the strategies to achieve its sustainability in the Chilean context, the elements that situate the radio station as a media station in the post-dictatorship scenario and the need to contribute to the process of democracy building by pluralizing the voices that express themselves through this media.

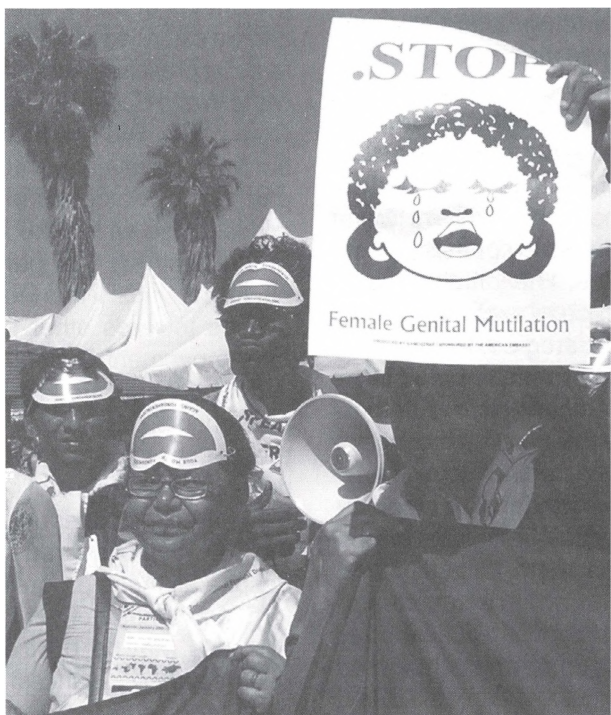
There are two highlighted strategies: on the one hand, the economic strategies based on the rent of radio slots to guarantee the financial stability of the radio station; and on the other, the strategies to create local and global networks, so as to ensure plural expression and insert the content-production in an international scenario.

Actions aimed at placing the agenda of sexual and reproductive rights into women's social organizations is the practice under analysis in Peru. It deals with the process by which leaders of women's social organizations move from certain actions (nutrition, TBC) in the health field to others (contraceptive methods, HIV/AIDS) with the intention of introducing their own gender demands.

The method used for moving from welfare policies to citizen identity was the result of self-consciousness, exigibility and follow-up of public policies. This gave them legitimacy before the health sector authorities and, simultaneously, placed them in a new scenario where their roles within the community and before the State were provided with other contents.

Female leaders engaged in this experience were trained on CITs (Communication and Information Technologies). Access to the Internet not only enhanced communications within the group but also facilitated the exploration of other issues and the use of e-mail for other related activities. This experience poses the challenge of establishing the connections between the agenda of sexual and reproductive rights with the social and economic rights.

The experience of the blog "I had an abortion" (Yo aborte) was the practice documented in Uruguay. This action used the CITs (Communication and Information Technologies) and gave voice to the political individual who is behind the right to decide, politicizing a personal event by placing it in the public sphere.



By inviting people who had had an abortion or had helped others to have it to express it with their own voice and identity (in solidarity with a young woman of low economic resources who was recently convicted), it disrupted the double moral and injustice parameters on which the judicial systems are developed. Consequently, a new political atmosphere was generated that placed abortion decriminalization once again in the parliamentary agenda and contributed to its positive vote in the Senate a few months later.

The influence of our countries' institutional processes, the construction strategies of the feminist movement, the processes for the expansion of alliances in the development of the feminist agenda, in the local, regional and global, pose new theoretical and political challenges.

How can we modify the transformation imaginaries for them to integrate the diversity of players and demands while giving priority to the axes of political accumulation? How can we establish links and bonds between the local and the global? These are some of the questions posed by the systematization of the AFM practices ♦

1 Maria Betânia Avila. Presentation at the Meeting of the Brazilian Women's Articulation (Articulación de Mujeres Brasileñas). December, 2006. www.mujeresdelsur.org.uy

2 Bauman, Zygmunt, 1999, "La globalización. Consecuencias humanas", Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, Pág. 9



The global-local perspective

Virginia Vargas

Feminist Dialogues

For analyzing the global-local as regards to the Feminist Dialogues (FDs) we need to approach the framework of analysis where these practices take place within the context of the World Social Forum (WSF). The FDs started as an idea proposed by the Articulación Feminista MARCOSUR in the WSF 2003, in Porto Alegre, and were materialized first in the WSF 2004 in Mumbai, then in the WSF 2005 in Porto Alegre and lastly in the WSF 2007 in Nairobi. In all cases, the FDs held meetings on the three days before the WSF. The changes occurred in these three events ought to be remembered, yet they are not explicitly mentioned in the document. This is perhaps the first remark to be made, though it gives quite an interesting idea on the process.

What is the impression around the Feminist Dialogues, considering the interventions, interviews and readings by Ana Cristina (González), as regards to the practices? They are seen as a very particular event of innovation for the meeting of feminists called from the South, independent from any other international instances and governments, and open to the diversity of feminist

identities and agendas. Let me put an emphasis on the issue of diversity, clearly reflected in the multiple experiences of movement construction in different cultures and places in the world but that have a common umbrella in the frame of the World Social Forum.

Though the FDs are regarded as a space under permanent construction which suffered several modifications from the outset, many of its participants see them as a potentiality for revitalizing the internationalist and transnational feminist movement and for connecting women's experiences by fostering new relationships between feminists and other social movements.

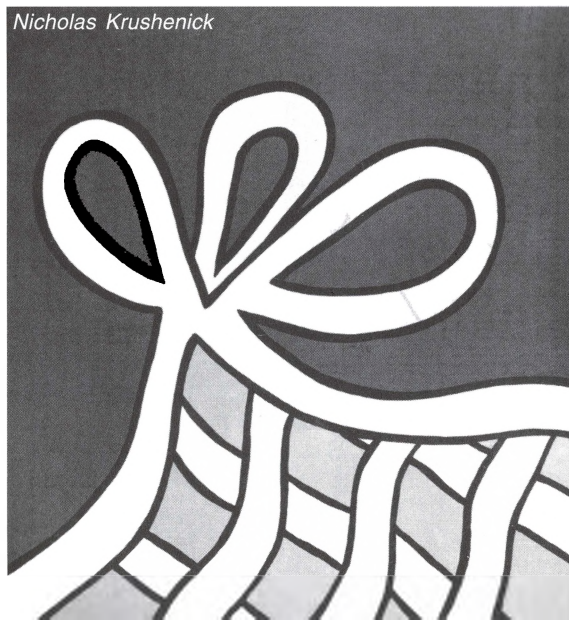
They are the outcome of two main concerns. The first is linked to their position in the frame of the World Social Forum, intended to coordinate with the attending feminists and provide greater visibility to feminist agendas within this space, feeding a critical mass. The second is the interest to achieve a feminist space for internal dialogue, not determined by global agendas, especially from the United Nations or even from the Forum. There were tensions at first for the different emphasis placed on each of these strategies. The initial strategy was to open a feminist space to exchange ideas about our practices and strategies. However, it became more and more important to gain active impact within the World Social Forum itself, in the idea of overcoming the fragmentation of agendas and link the feminist issues to a more structural discussion on the model of democracy and the confrontation to these three global forces that fuel the Forum: neoliberalism, militarism and fundamentalisms. The first two are the axes of the World Social Forum; the third is our emphasis, and we are constantly striving to position it within the Forum.

Articulation and Action

Virtual communication – accompanied by some in-person meetings (the Pre-dialogues) has been the methodology, the form of interaction and constitution of these spaces of dialogue. Throughout these years of existence of the FDs, we have accomplished a collective intellectual basis, a collective construction of documents, of stances.

The FDs have given rise to different forms of articulation and action. The first articulating space is the Coordinating Group. Initially, there were seven networks and then, after the proposal and insistence of the AFM, other networks from different regions joined this group and extended the Coordinated Group to twelve. This process has had several characteristics. First, we achieved a good level of team cohesion and consolidation, and we extended to other networks. Also, we gained feminist presence within the coordinating instances of the World Social Forum such as the International Committee. We are there not for the Dialogues but for our relevant networks; yet the fact of being part of the Dialogues process has generated a critical mass within the International Committee of the feminists that participate in it, visualizing our leaderships. It has led to alliances and fostered actions towards other movements such as the Inter-movement Dialogue: panels set within the World Social Forum with different union movements, gays, lesbians, trans, etc. It facilitated the construction of trust and solidarity among networks and organizations from different regions. It favoured the construction of political bonds and the definition of shared strategies. Nevertheless, despite all these progresses, the document sets forth that it has not yet led to the construction of alliances. May be; but it also depends on what we understand by "alliances", and this could be a good point for discussion.

Nicholas Krushenick



As regards to the discourses and practices of different regions, Latin America is regarded as the one who contributes the most in theoretical and conceptual developments and political analysis, who helps to understand the movement and its complexities in terms of agendas, and in terms of strategies who better understands global politics. Asian women possess refined analysis on the State, militarism, diversity of identities and on the multiethnic perspective with significant emphasis on the existence of castes. African women stress on poverty and inequality, the discussion of democracy from the issue of redistribution and reproduction in the global World, and the presence of women in the State. Europe and United States, though with scarce participation, share common issues and contribute matters related to migrant women and human trafficking.

The Dialogues frame of analysis is that of a Radical Democracy, as a basis to dealing with issues related to neoliberalisms, fundamentalisms, militarisms, the transversal axes of which are the political bodies and the politics of the body. The FDs appear as a multidimensional process rather than just as an event. This element does appear in the document, but, in my opinion, it is worth clarifying the type of processes that are in fact coming to life. The nature of what we have done through the Dialogues is not prescriptive, it is a search; from the first to the current one we wanted to reconsider, modify, rethink, look for methodological and theoretical ways to approach such dimensions. It is a space of critical feminist reflection that still believes in a project of movement building, now in the global arena and under new feminist conditions: more fluid and filled with diversities and contradictions.

Feminism, gender and diversity

Here is another outstanding point I gathered from one of the readings: feminist dialogues are politically extraordinary as they put special emphasis on feminism rather than on gender. While this approach is politically fundamental, yet I would like to see a perspective of transversality, as an

axis of analysis, as it allows to incorporate the body in its intersection with the struggles of many other movements and players who foster emancipatory changes.

The FDs goals mentioned by the document are many: the consolidation of an international autonomous space from the South; the increase in the power of feminist organizations in national and global spaces; the recovery for the feminism of the dimensions of sexuality and sexual diversity in the frame of radical democracy and fundamentalisms; the recognition of the importance of the translation process, not only related to language but to the search of the way to match with other movements' discourses, proposals and directions, while our representatives get to express themselves and act in the same level. And surely there is something else mentioned in the document: the Campaign Against Fundamentalisms furthered by the Articulación Feminista MARCOSUR, which constitutes a common umbrella within the Dialogues.

One of the tensions posed by the document is to decide whether we want to dialogue or to build movement. I believe they are not opposite; the point is to build by dialoguing, i.e., to build in broad spaces where diversity is the richness or in spaces a little smaller where profoundness allows us to move forward in reflection. Another tension presented by the document and reverted by this Dialogue is the impact on the World Social Forum other than by those integrating the coordinating group. The methodology of the Dialogues changed drastically in the last WSF, as it was decided to implement direct actions to within the World Social Forum, besides the prior three-day meeting. We organized an extraordinary and amazingly well-attended demonstration; we worked in different kinds of panels; we took charge of the document that would be included in the Forum's final report; many women took up and committed themselves to our slogans, etc. And, by all means, we quarrelled with the Pro Life people, who were demonstrating against safe and legal abortion. According to the document, another tension is that we have gained impact on the Forum now that the space is losing legitimacy. This is an opinion rather than a categorical statement, and it may be refuted.



As to challenges, let me make reference to some of them that may become a subject for discussion: how to sustainably disseminate the Feminist Dialogues' discussions, as there are larger groups in the countries at the local level, etc; how to improve the translation spaces among the movements' different expressions; could we hold regional FDs to get deeper into global analyses, and how to make them useful for women in their local environments.

Brazil

The AMB presents a quite interesting document with an innovative political experience, contributing elements that constitute their own way of self-organization and feminist political action. It understands feminism in its double function of critical thinking and political practice, and it expects not only to strengthen a broad and plural network or articulation, but to build the Brazilian Women's Articulation as a social movement and then give ideas for a new way of doing politics. Through all these years, the AMB process has provided a

number of processes, richnesses, encounters and issues to be dealt with which are familiar to those of us who are near it.

From the Local Global Articulation we can analyze some of these processes. First, we see that the Brazilian Women's Articulation actually emerged as a result of the process for building global presence of Latin American feminisms; initially, within the space of the United Nations, in the light of the Beijing Conference. From the very beginning, the access to this space of global feminist construction was surrounded by a high level of conflict related to some of the significant restrictions of the Beijing process as a result of certain decisions coming from above, which characterized the United Nations' process. The main issue was that the funding for Latin America and the Caribbean was entrusted to USAID, a quite discredited United States financial agency. The global impact of the decision of the Brazilian group – close to Beijing - to reject the USAID funding was extremely relevant as it represented an ethical example for other regions as well as for Latin America, despite the acceptance by the other regions. It posed a critical tension that persisted all along the Beijing process.

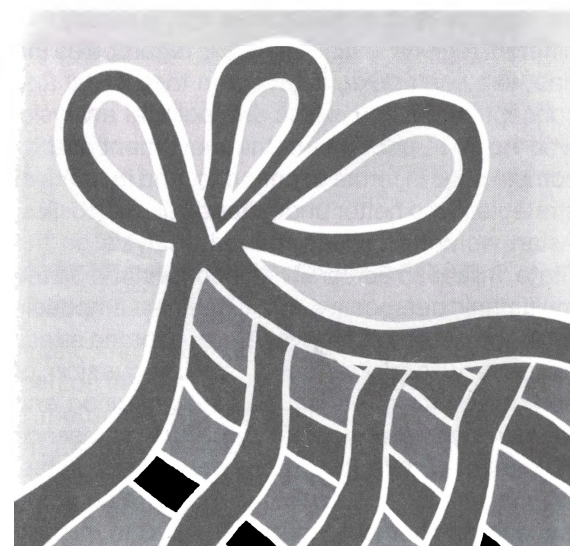
It is also interesting to see the different way in which documents were produced for the Conference, as it was not entrusted to experts, like in other countries, but rather the result of discussions held in several women's meetings throughout the states. This expansion in the radius of action for preparation of the Conference was evidenced by the fact of having 300 women from various origins present at Beijing. After the process concluded the AMB remained articulated with actions related to supervision, follow-up and rendering of accounts. However, in 2000 the emphasis shifted towards the construction of a women's platform to negotiate autonomously with the state, in a broad alliance of all the Feminist Movement. This is the origin of the Feminist Political Platform that gathers the main demands of Brazilian women while it echoes the significant dimensions existing in regional and global agendas. The fight against racism adds clearly and strongly to this demand and positioning; this fight gained a lot more visibility after the Conference.

The main emphases are connected to the democratic construction of sexual rights, reproductive rights and racism. Both dimensions –democracy and sexual and reproductive rights– are also part of feminist regional and global agendas. However, while racism is also part of the feminist agenda, it finds in the Brazilian feminist struggles and proposals a rich and unusual analysis that is not found with equal strength in the rest of Latin America.

This shift towards a dimension of consolidation of an inclusive and plural perspective, as well as the visibility and potential of the proposal, is in line with the emergence of other global spaces, such as the World Social Forum. This is also the period in which the *Articulación Feminista MERCOSUR* came to life, of which the AMB was a founding group. Similarly, in this period the AMB drafted its chart of principles in a process of comprehensive discussion among all the states. It is worth mentioning that its positioning as a non-governmental, unbiased and unconventional political space, echoes directly on the contents of the chart of principles of the World Social Forum.

From the beginning, the commitment of the Brazilian Women's Association with the World Social Forum has been quite active. The first Forum in Port Alegre witnesses the organization of the first action for feminist visibility in the FEMEA planet, where feminist issues around democracy, racism, abortion, etc were posed (although it was later understood that this strategy wasn't the ideal one, as it tended to "isolate" women from the WSF dynamics). It has also played an active role in the process of the Forum and its multiple events and processes at the local, national, thematic level –such as the Forum of migrations, or the Hemispheric Social Forum and the WSF itself. The AMB has followed the global struggles manifested in Brazil, for example with Bush's visit, which was quite striking. At this point, there is a working group created within the AMB called the Group for Global Struggles.

However, in the past decade and a little further, the AMB's constituent feature and its multiple expressions as to getting involved in global initiatives both as regards to estates and –mainly



in the last periods- to alternative spaces such as the World Social Forum and related processes, or to a regional global articulating space such as the AFM, fades off in the reflection and in the method proposed by the Brazilian Women's Association. Without going deeper into the method - which is quite interesting in its different levels of analysis and action - it lacks culmination, a type of vision more articulating in the global/local, which is clearly missing in the document as well as in other advocacy spaces, such as the Campaign Against Fundamentalisms where it had played and active role.

Chile

Radio Tierra develops a politized praxis to recover contents from the society and puts them into action for others. Radio Tierra is regarded as a means and an end of advocacy, of fuelling of agendas, of giving a voice to marginalized people, of what they call doing radio, of the perspective of recovering democracy after 17 years of dictatorship. It is born in 1991, and identifies itself with the gender approach. It recognizes it played an initial role of discursive vanguard over political affairs situated in the complex and faint division between the public and the private sphere, and recovers a conception of citizenship considered not only as an audience, but also as a social territory. Its stance in terms of global and regional agendas is given by its

participation in the World Social Forum and in the AMARC. The global context led it to shape up and define Radio Tierra to its current state, which differs from its origin. The change of priorities in agendas at the international level promoted the search for different self-managed forms of associativity, with sustainability and innovation capacity in the discourse of communication for development. But they forgot to mention that this project also arouse as a project of the Latin American process, that was negotiated years ago in Denmark for creating a radio in Peru and another in Chile.

The use of communication technologies strengthens the exchange possibilities between Chile and Latin America, and brings global processes nearer to national realities in accordance with the conceptions. They invoke a new way of doing alternative politics; they do radio for doing politics through the consolidation of bonds and networks operating at local and global level. There is a conception of the current social subject from the local and the global. They underline that there is a citizenship globalization process, and therefore changes can't be made in one single side or level; possibilities are many, and are also fed by networks and global associativity. They have gained impact on regional and global issues at the World Social Forum, the Hemispheric Social Forum, the Migration Social Forum. The presence of Radio Tierra and AMARC in these forums has been clear and evident. They have influence on the national sphere, by actively participating in Chile's Social Forum, updating discussions on citizenship and the ways of advocacy, adding new questions and approaching the global to the local. They also have global-local struggles in the insight, such as breaking off with news reports from the large media, opposing to the power of the business elite, having a bearing on the right to communication, sustained on networked associative practices. In short, they seek to establish global bonds for a local advocacy and local bonds for a global advocacy. It is one of the documents that resemble the most to this analysis of the local global sphere, with this type of process it proposes in its practice.

Bolivia

The Constituent Assembly represents an interesting practice; yet, it lacks two elements: the reference to the regional-global and to the ethnic dimension in the analysis of the practice, particularly in a country like Bolivia in the present time. The regional and global relevance of Bolivia is fundamental. It is an expression of symbolic and actual change in many manners. It is a new indigenous subject; indigenous women who have their place in the power of the state and society, and this characteristic is still not sufficiently visibilized. Accordingly, the existence of the evident conflict between feminist and indigenous leaders is not there. These two dimensions are not considered as antecedents in analyzing women's situation. Indigenous women took a passive stance; they sometimes appear merely as participants in workshops. If they give priority to the rural area, they visualize the indigenous woman but provide no ways for creating new intercultural bonds from the feminists. In the advocacy work, women in the Constituent Assembly are identified with social movement struggles and with indigenous and popular claims rather than with those related to gender. However, there is no report on the difficulties, lessons or perspectives to see the connections and look for a way to express this in another kind of insight or language. The documented practice is a good strategy to generate alternatives, discussion and training processes and to foster territorial meetings and come up with common proposals.

We can see from the analysis of the practices that the work developed from the project analyzed was extraordinary, but it was remarkably weakened by the frailty in the approach for establishing links between interculturality and gender. A good advocacy strategy in the Constituent Assembly was followed to incorporate women issues. Issues of the feminist agenda as crucial and resisted as sexual and reproductive rights were raised, besides the issue of secular state, evidencing the controversies that they carry into the Assembly. Yet, the analysis of the practices calls for an articulating of gender and ethnicity in order to draw all its complexity.

Uruguay

The campaign for the decriminalization of abortion followed a strategy that represents a crucial dimension for global and regional feminist agendas, from the specific and highly favorable characteristics –despite its contradictions– in a country like Uruguay. It is quite interesting to see the significant weight of society, but not as in “how mean they all are”. The practice reviewed is the abortion Blog in Uruguay within the process of struggle for abortion during the last period, which was the outcome of a great mobilization. The blog started the discussion on abortion and collected nine thousand signatures of men and women. It was highly inclusive, not restricted to feminists. I had an abortion or I accompanied someone to have an abortion opened an incredible spectrum of impact, advocacy and challenge to traditional ways of doing politics. First there is the impact on discourse, getting to shift from one based on medical perspective to another on women's rights



Nicholas Krushenick

and democracy, and to have a right lacking a relevant subject giving way to a democratic political subject, expressed through these nine thousand signatures.

In my opinion, this dimension of a subject-lacking right giving way to a right openly and clearly embodied in nine thousand people that becomes a sturdy subject constitutes one of the most interesting and significant changes. It hits the central contradiction of a secular and modern society with an authoritarian and individualist dimension embedded in a government which is, additionally, a left-wing government. This arbitrariness is even more surprising as, according to the blog, in 1979 the Police Headquarter of Montevideo, in charge of detecting and suppressing aborting women, declared in a document that it was impossible to repress abortion, legitimizing at a stroke the institutional discourse. This was back in 1979 and they did not belong to the left wing; however, look what is going on now.

There is a phrase in the document that summarizes this dimension of local/global articulation I had to analyze: at the international level, this process is closely related with the extraordinary events of the eighties and nineties promoted by feminists to consolidate in the agenda of agencies from transnational organisms the claim for sexual and reproductive rights as crucial dimensions for a new citizenship.

Paraguay

The practice invokes the process of discussion, consultation, formulation and advocacy in terms of the law against all forms of discrimination in Paraguay, fostered in the first place by the Coordination for Paraguayan Women, in broad collaboration with other sectors of society. There is a significant alliance between feminists, United Nations' agencies such as UNFPA (where there are also feminists and men and women), – congresspeople, I imagine. The important result of this practice is a bill against all forms of discrimination in Paraguay. The political core of this orientation is that discriminations cannot be fought against individually because we will end up

weakened by them. It is equally relevant to point out the place that issues of inequality and discrimination find in the society, including the sexual and reproductive rights, sexual orientation and abortion, as well as the organization of a broad network against all forms of discrimination. Meetings, debates, books published, alliances broadened, etc, present the practice as a contribution to the discussion about feminist leadership extension and strengthening in Latin American and national contexts. They echo the strategies developed from groups like the *Articulación Feminista MERCOSUR*, resort to this perspective of intersectionality and to the possibility of building knowledge from this different points of view and insights, which is quite in line with the approach we are setting out in this forum. As regards to the idea of equality without exclusions and the overcoming of all forms of exclusion, feminisms accomplish a symbolic and actual leadership from the CDE, the Documentation and Research Center, as reflected in the document. The role of Line Bareiro in this process is utterly essential, as it is the role of all the other girls.

Peru

It is the analysis of the Committee for the Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Rights (*La Mesa de Vigilancia por los Derechos Sexuales y los Derechos Reproductivos*) of grassroots social organizations in various popular districts of metropolitan Lima. This is a very interesting document, as it reflects some of the significant tendencies of feminist movements during the last period. Besides highlighting certain days of the feminist regional calendar, it echoes the international in the incorporation of Cairo and Beijing struggles and processes, also recovering social watch as a right within this frame, and opposing to fundamentalist groups – a practice shared by various feminist and sexual diversity groups of the region. Thus, the elements in common with the other Latin American experiences are both the struggle against local fundamentalisms and the way they impact and deepen the democratic limitations of women. In the Peruvian context where this practice is developed, women

were active players of the struggle for recovering democracy. Yet when Toledo came to power he forgot women's contribution and even named an Opus Dei member as Secretary of Health.

This practice also recalls some of the new feminist strategies and tendencies, like the strategy to have an impact not only on other men and women players, but specifically on the women's popular movement, to give them pre-eminence in this struggle. The analysis also evidences that there has been a change in strategies, from a rationale of projects – so clear in the preceding decade – to a rationale of feminist political strengthening with other sectors. The document should tune up the global dimension of its analysis.

At this point, I would like to raise some of the questions as a contribution to discussion.

How can we articulate the global with the local? Which agendas or discourses are able to articulate different feminist discourses or agendas, different players?

Which issues of the feminist agenda are undertaken by other players? Which of them are the most agreed upon and which the most controversial? ♦



Issues for the debate

Betânia Ávila

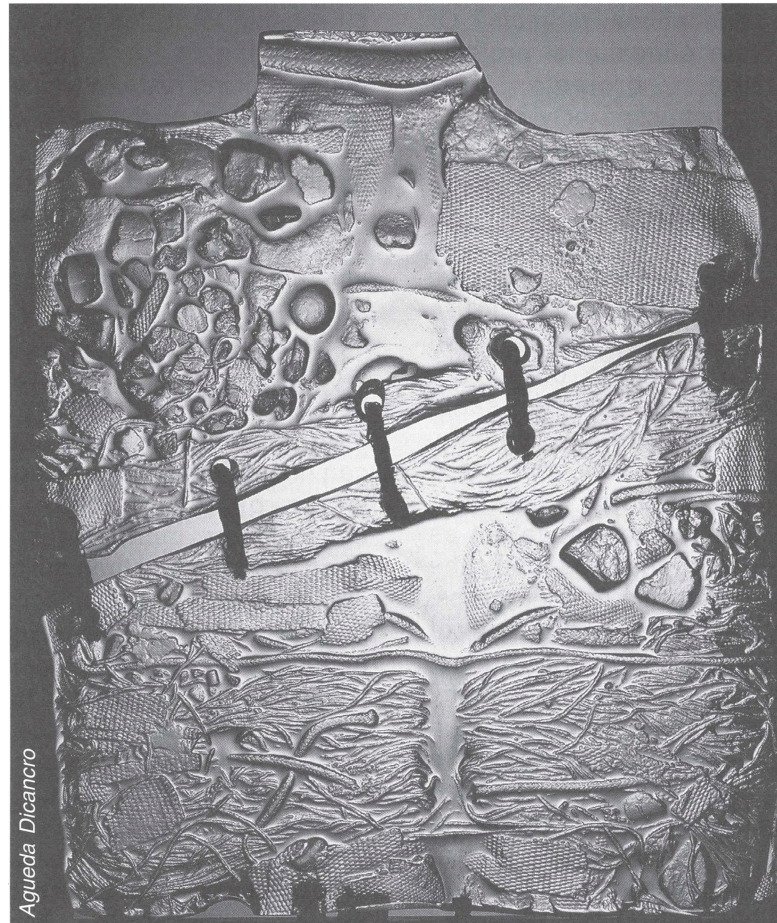
From the practice analysis there arise some issues for the debate

Firstly, there is the relationship of feminist movements with the women's movement. Collective experiences have been analyzed; however, in those mentioned here – whether as a mobilization actor or as public policies – the feminist movement is always connected to the women's movement. It should be noted that the experiences analyzed are presented from the feminist movement, thus raising many questions: In the first place, we have the question about policies put forward by Gina (Vargas), which is a more general issue, as women who integrate women's movements are highly appreciated by the feminist movement, or participate in it.

Why is it necessary to have a strategy of a feminist movement addressed to the women's movement? For it to be more comprehensive? Is it possible for the feminist movement to achieve its emancipatory goals without movements, and above all without the poor women - who are the most unequal subjects?

And what are the poor women who integrate popular grassroots movements? What strategies and practices do they have? These are some of the questions arising from the experiences presented.

All collective experiences reported by the committee of Peru around the AFM are related to that: what is the origin of the relationship between feminist movement and women's movements, and of the construction of the feminist movement and the popular women's movement?

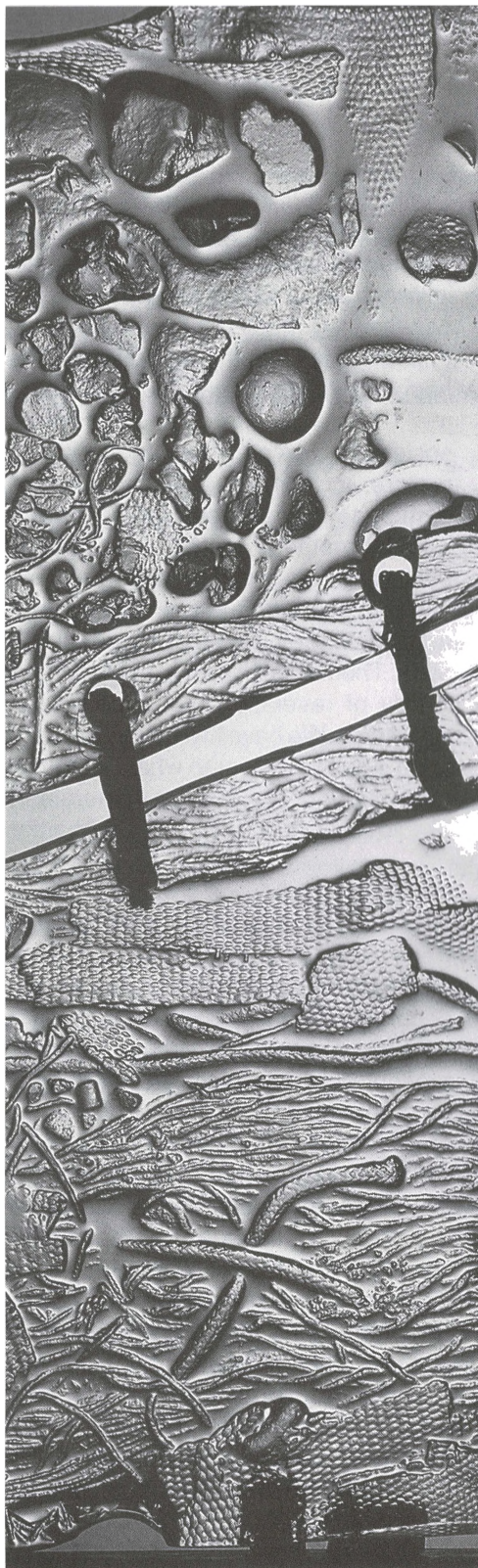


Secondly, there is the advocacy on public policies regarded as social policies with a specific impact on women's quality of life. Here we come to the same question, because I think that the strategy adopted by the feminist movement in Latin America took into account the inequality of poor women, and this is the reason why the social rights agenda is so strong and oriented to the recognition of this inequality. Experiences in public policies are successful and put emphasis on the achievement of small and specific accomplishments. Still, it is a very small scale in terms of social public policies having an effect on women's lives. Paradise is once again the women's movement we always had, but once the harder struggle against the dictatorial military State was over, we understand that without the collaboration of forces created outside the State as a movement we are not capable of imposing political changes.

Lastly, there is the issue of legislative processes. Two things ought to be clarified: the relationship with the parties is disastrous, and the lack of mobilization capacity requires a lot of effort to place public politics into the legislation. What happens with the capacity of the feminist movement who introduce ideas for the society as a whole, such as the idea of rupture, the idea of radicality? Radical democracy is a theoretical concept, a political method, another way of doing politics. These are ideas that break into society create ruptures and place us in antagonism, in contradiction with the other. There are absences, yet that is also a way of revelation: absence reveals something. We have two experiences that are the exact answer to what I'm saying, but which ought not to be generalized: "Radio Terra" and the Blog about Abortion.

We feminists have a great difficulty in constructing discourses and codes to generate rupture as well as understanding, intended not only to deconstruct but to propose something as well, because those values positively presented by feminism are often taken by other subjects and other discourses and we lose the authorship of these proposals. Discourses are incorporated into the theory and analyses and values are absorbed, disregarding the subject. Communication experiences transmit this problem to all addressees of our discourse. But, who are we talking to? Is it only to ourselves?

Radio Tierra puts forward a very interesting experience of simultaneous fight against the economic and the symbolic power, as it holds a strong analysis on the media as an economic



power. Experiences also reveal the element of feminist training, the educational processes. Are other women beneficiaries of our educational projects? Or are educational projects the projects for constructing individual and collective subjects and also for constructing movements?

In the feminist movement we don't have—I'm going to use an old-fashioned word as I can find no other—the "officials" in the scale demanded by society, governments and other movements. We are exhausted, as we act as representatives, carry the documents, draft the theses, and this a process of methodological ethics, because there are many feminist groups engaged in educational practices. We criticize the State and the governments but we need to move forward with a clear idea of the kind of State we want to construct and democratize, and what we can expect from it.

What is going on around national states and the global international situation? We are still working on the little mechanistic relationship of the democratization of national states and of the world, but we still lack national democracies and international processes working in unison.

There are hypercritical sectors who believe that national states are completely obsolete, that international politics is constructed under the corporative defense of national states, and that citizenship is so far marked by boundaries of territories and conflicts of interests. We all need to work harder on the elaboration of our own thinking, senses, meanings. The AMB, for example, refers to construction as a movement, but the meanings inherent to such AMB perspective are not so clear, as the methods are not sufficiently assessed politically.

There are terms with which we can no longer conceptualize the works or the practice, for example the monitorings; we need to go beyond their limits by means of an active, critical and controlling subject. There is no dialectics in monitoring. Going back to my favorite term, it is not a relation: it is a task. We have to give political content to our strategies.

We lack elaboration around theoretical and political issues that can in fact define us as a feminist thinking. It is not enough to simply monitor and advocate as it repeats a duality: you monitor and you advocate, but this does not give rise to a dialectics or a critical practice with respect to the State and at the same time a relationship with the State. This is also an issue, because the thing is to relate or not with the State, and, if so: how should we do it? In a critical and autonomous way? This represents a problem.

Finally, let me make reference to three topics. First, the relation with the new and the radical and the ground-breaking, as we believe that a new idea should not necessarily entail something radical or entailing a rupture, it may also be a trap or something superficial.

I also think that, quite often, social movements and feminist movements are very voluntarist. Our concerns are new but we need something else to turn the new into something effectively revolutionary. Therefore, we have to go beyond the new experiences, and here I will put forward a provocation that comes from the Feminist Dialogues. I really enjoy reading the dialogues as I find in them an elaborated experience that will actually contribute a lot to the concrete construction of an experience, and this is exactly what we lack, the elaboration of what we do.

Here is a provocation: the Feminist Dialogues are a world articulation of women regardless of their nature. But within this novelty there is a subtle repetition of hierarchical relations among Latin America, Asia and Africa. I wouldn't know how to face that, I simply pose it as an issue; I have no answer, as the call from this perspective is new.

However, if we look deeply into what Ana Cristina (González) analyzed based on people's opinion (rather than into what Ana Cristina says), there is a social division of work in Latin America: the intellectual and political work. Asia is the mean between Latin America and Africa. Africa contributes in

terms of poverty debate as the poorest women are in Africa, mostly because Latin America appears only as an intellectual and political subject although it has a tremendous poverty. Why is poverty experience in Latin America not reflected? This could be a space for profound dialogue with Africa.

This actually is a provocation, I am sure. It is what I have learnt and the reason why I want to pose a concern, because we ourselves say that it is a new practice but for me the concept of "new" is not enough.

This is not self-criticism. If we are here to analyze experiences we cannot merely analyze, there comes a time when we have to recognize the problems; otherwise, we are repeating a hierarchy. My concern is neither a self-criticism nor a criticism. I just ask: how is it possible to construct a political sphere of equality amid relations of serious inequality? Radical democracy and its theoreticians Chantal Mouffe and Laclau - who made an extraordinary contribution - talk about a formality, not in the representative sense but the formal concept instead. The access to this equality is not yet theorized, as the idea of politics as a sphere for equality is a trap of liberalism that still remains, because social inequalities are reproduced within the political sphere. The political sphere is not a priori the equality sphere, that would be the liberal ideology.

For example, we will make an articulation, yet the relationship among Africa, Asia and Latin America occurs under very

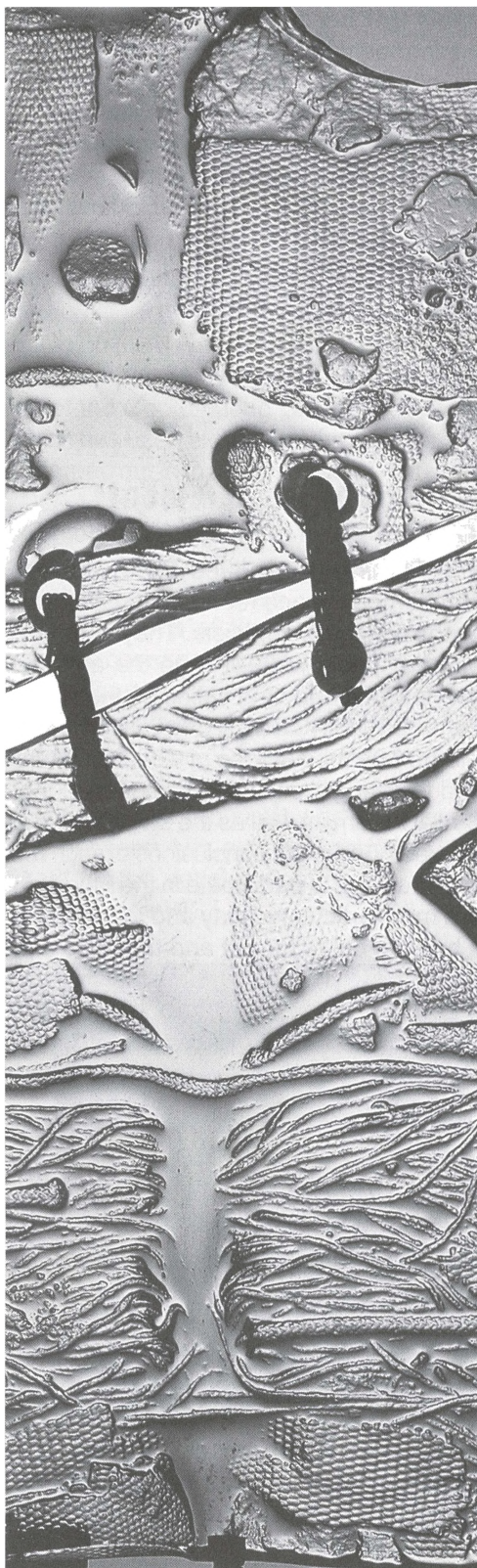
different and unequal conditions of access to the political sphere. This will certainly influence our feminist movement relationship which has a middle class origin, and is a wide women's movement growing toward popular sectors, the democratic popular sectors.

Lastly, the other issue is the relationship between movement and power, considering that we are questioning the political parties, as they don't carry out the mediation and depend on very specific and particular interests. I believe that a strong social movement is political, even if we want a radicalization of direct democracy, we want a plebiscite, a referendum, a participatory democracy. Those other democratic processes can only act through peoples' movements. Then, movement is power. Power for women is synonymous with a movement of strong women, even for those women who integrate the parties, the parliaments, because the struggle is not individual.

And finally, how can social transformation be accomplished? Theoreticians of democracies are inspired by the feminists, by us. Except for Brazil, because the main sociologists (except for Boaventura de Souza) are male chauvinists; I don't know what happens in other Latin American countries. For example, all European theoreticians who talk about the new forms of democracy base their theory on the feminist experience, whether on the issue of body, or of the body as a political subject, the public and the private, production – reproduction, the issues brought

about by feminism and also by the feminism practice, the subjectivity, the criticism to a single subject, the micro experiences that have been constructed as a movement.

So, we also need our own theorization, mainly us from the South. This elaboration about the dialogue is very important, considering that feminists from the North, who are questioning or have questioned a lot during the eighties, were based on the voices of the South, on that new experience of production, social transformation and democracy. One last element in reference to something cited by Gina and that I find really important, which is the experience of the AMB together with another connotation I would like to recall: the processes of the UN Conference are poorly analyzed by us with respect to their capacity of triggering movement construction. This is a major flaw, as movements are different now; there was a time of strengthening during the advances of neoliberalism. The production of a platform is much more analyzed than its capacity to generate the substantial and strong national processes that became internationalized and created sound regional movements ♦



About the Feminist Dialogues

Ana Cristina González Vélez

I. General elements

The Feminist Dialogues (FDs) represent an autonomous space for reflection self-convened by the Southern feminists. They commenced in Mumbai (India, 2004) with the antecedent of the networks meeting called by the Articulación Feminista MARCOSUR one year before in Porto Alegre with the purpose of discussing strategies and fostering feminist participation in the World Social Forum as well as the so-called meeting of the tree. One of the conclusions of such meetings was the need to participate in the Mumbai Forum in a more articulated way and to be able to have a bearing on its format and thematic axes. It is important to underline that feminists have been present in the WSF from the outset and that many of the constituent organizations of the FDs already integrated its International Committee.

The so-called meeting of the tree gave rise to the Feminist Dialogues (FDs) that gathered women from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and, to a lesser extent, women from Europe and North America.

Interaction and learning, pluralism and diversity, sharing of visions and experiences, intensity, organization, challenges, freedom, poverty, thought and inspiration, are some of the concepts collected among its participants describing what feminists from all over the world think of this new opportunity to meet and dialogue, which we intend to analyze in this document.

Ever since the I FDs, several discussions were held around some axes of analysis, which have prevailed - in one way or another - all along the three Dialogues thus revealing to what extent they are handled as a process in construction. At the I FDs (denominated "building solidarities") discussions were focused on the local/global division, issues related to human and women's rights, the body, and sexual and reproductive rights. The II FDs dealt with: challenging neoliberalism, religious fundamentalisms and militarization. The III FDs kept the same axes of analysis (neoliberal globalization, fundamentalisms and militarisms) with the addition of a new framework for these debates: radical democracy.

The fact that the III FDs were held in Nairobi evidences that these Dialogues have generated a dynamics intended to generate, from the global, spaces for meeting and political discussion with several goals and purposes - as reported by the participants. Some months before the so called "preliminary dialogues" were held in preparation of the FDs, in order to plan and incorporate previous learnings, get a better insight of the different regions, integrate organizations of African women more consistently, to widen the Coordinating Committee and to discuss around the methodology.

On the other hand, as mentioned in some documents about the FDs, there were changes during these four years that were clearly



expressed in Nairobi. The methodology, for example, has been criticized both by participants and by the coordinating group. Therefore, in the last version there was more emphasis on the discussion around the contents of feminist political agendas, in the face of the current challenges and the construction - from multiple initiatives - of global feminist agendas. That is why the call for registration was addressed to "feminists concerned with the political project of building movements" (Methodological Note FD, 2007). Summing up, these III FDs are focused on how the feminist visions and actions contribute to the transformation of democracies, and how democracies need these visions and actions to be really called as such.

In any case, the FDs represent a meeting innovation among feminists: they are global, autonomous with regard to other international and governmental instances, open to all diversities of feminist agendas and identities and are called by Southern women. Within the context of globalization, they constitute a way of building alternative reflections and responses and a way of acting of the international and internationalist feminist movement. In addition, they are a space under construction, full of tensions, with doubts about the need to generate joint actions to have an influence on the World Social Forum, though held earlier. They are an attempt to communicate and translate languages, contexts and strategies.

II. Dimensions of analysis about the FDs

1. Feminists Dialogues as a space

As expressed by the objectives set in the FDs, they have been conceptualized as a meeting for feminists and women's networks to work collectively with a view to revitalizing a transnational/international movement; facilitating the improvement of advocacies and building strategies to interconnect women's experiences and to promote new relations between feminists and other social movements, among others.

The FDs arise from the interest of - basically Southern - feminists to have a space to meet and dialogue with feminists attending the World Social Forum (WSF) in order to determine whether it was possible to build an insight and a presence at the WSF in Mumbai and at the subsequent forums. Therefore, they appear as an answer to the poor visibility of women and their agendas at the Forum, by proposing to reflect the enormous diversity of their movements and the contributions they could make to the construction of alternatives against neoliberal globalization. The objective was to create a critical mass that would impact the WSF by devising joint actions to bear an influence thereon. Some feminists even believe that the FDs are a strategy to change the male domination in the WSF where, despite the massive presence of women, their concerns and interests had not been actually integrated in the "core" of discussions. At present, there are more women speaking in central tables and aspects from the feminist agendas have been incorporated to the thematic axes of the Forum; yet, there is still a long way to go.

However, the FDs also stem from the idea of having an own feminist space to dialogue, with agendas, meetings and debates not determined - as on other occasions - by global instances like the United Nations. After the conferences of the last decade, the lack of forums for international debate led to the decision of developing a space

to meet; something that, except for the Latin-American women, did not exist within the movements of other regions of the world. Perhaps this is why many of the FDs participants highlight the fact that in this global and diverse space of self-convened feminists - autonomous with respect to the government spaces - context discussion has been one of the most important elements of debates. It was in the FDs that many realized that the same agenda - for example, the struggle for the right to abortion - means different things to different women in India and in Latin America, or the significance that the mere reference to sexual orientation has in the context of weak or almost non-existent democracies; or even how, once we understand the context, we find in the ones and the others (Europe and Asia, for instance) the two sides of the same problem: migrant women connecting different realities (continents and regions) and insights.

The FDs are also a space of confluence for different movements of women who intend to relate the work they are developing locally and nationally to the one undertaken at the regional and international levels, analyzing coincidences and contradictions of the responses in order to set up a common ground and be able to develop joint strategies, perhaps in a further stage. They are a forum that puts into dialogue the enormous diversity of women represented by feminists and their agendas: those working on issues such as distribution, rural area and poverty, with those working on political participation, reproductive rights or sexual diversity, among others.

Feminists are struggling from the FDs to face the huge fragmentation - derived from the multiple agendas and identities - existing between women and the relationship between them and other agendas. In this respect, the FDs are a space intended to link issues pertaining to the so-called women's agenda (as violence, abortion, domestic work) to more structural discussions about the democracy model we are looking for, the impact of neoliberal globalization, militarism and fundamentalisms. They are a space aiming to evidence that the inclusion of the so-called "women's issues" inexorably integrates a radical democratic agenda.

Finally, the FDs have compelled the global feminist movement to include the importance of "translation" as one of its major challenges, not only the translation of the different languages but also the understanding of the issues in the light of the diverse contexts to the effects of building an alternative political thinking globally.

2. Forms of articulation and action

Discussion on the development of actions within the WSF has been an ever present aspect in the debates of the Coordinating Group (CG) of the FDs, which has been expressed through the joint actions carried out in the WSF by some networks of the CG. However, in general terms we could say that most participants do not see the FDs as a space that has so far moved further in the construction of alliances, particularly if considered in terms of the WSF sphere. Yet, except for the coordinating group - where clearly there are alliances between its networks and organizations, both for the organizing the FDs and for carrying out joint actions in the frame of the WSF - the alliances beyond these two objectives are still incipient and take place basically between two or three networks that coordinate for the development of activities or joint actions in the WSF.



In turn, the Campaign Against Fundamentalisms has been a link or a common umbrella to provide more visibility to the participating networks and organizations of the FDs. Likewise, the campaign has been extended through the diverse actions carried out by women's groups throughout the world using their communication materials, adapting them to their contexts and broadening their contents.

On the other hand, the fact that an important number of women who are members of the International Committee of the WSF also integrate the CG facilitates the influence on the Forum, as the political discussions within the CG strengthen these feminists' leaderships and grant them the symbolic power inherent to the FDs, thus fortifying them and amplifying their voices in the decision-making scenarios of the Forum. In this respect, the FDs are regarded as a potential space to build alliances within the WSF, given that part of the members of the CG also integrate its International Committee and – from that place – they can generate alliances which may later be reflected upon the undertaking of some of the issues of the feminist agendas and through joint activities as those developed in the Intermovement Dialogues.

The WSF is regarded as a forum for the alliance-building, as it compels us to “move” towards other movements and to establish other relations like those set up to elaborate action and mobilization proposals throughout 2007. But this does not entail that it is clear – at least for most of the participants – to what extent the FDs are serving as a forum to influence the WSF, or else, which strategies we apply to dialogue with other movements, aside from some key initiatives, such as the Intermovement Dialogues.

In such regard, it is worth to underscore tensions arising in this field. By way of example, though it is possible for feminists to articulate in political alliances with other WSF movements against the war in Iraq, it is not clear how to articulate the criticisms about sexism and racism raised at the same time against the said movements by feminists within these type of alliances.



Aside from the Coordinating Group (CG), the FDs are mainly a space to meet and exchange experiences and strategies to be applied in order to strengthen the bonds between groups and to share the diverse realities, or, in many cases, to consolidate relationships between feminists who are already connected internationally; but it is not yet a space for the building of actual alliances.

In terms of organization, the FDs have a feature that makes them unique within the international context: they are called by Southern feminists. This peculiarity is highly stimulating not only for Southern feminists themselves but also for those who participate as “Northern” feminists, who – like the Europeans – believe that this fact represents an enormous difference if compared to other spaces (though they are committed to agendas similar to those raised from the South). Among the differences mentioned, there is the difficulty that arises in bringing the European feminism agendas and their concerns to a Southern space wherein a critical vision is being developed. This entails that the movements from different regions be examined in the light of a more international/transnational insight.

In any case the FDs are a chance to put into dialogue the agendas and concerns still affecting women from the diverse systems of oppression and exclusion – regardless of their regions. The intention is to connect feminisms from different regions based on the Southern perspectives and agendas, and to position the feminists before the space of the Forum.

As to the alliances and fragility of the FDs, it is worth to underline that these spaces have been key for the building of trust and solidarities among the diverse regions' networks and organizations, and that trust is a main requirement for the further building of alliances. It is thanks to this trust that political bonds could be created, joint strategies among some networks could be defined and, in short, that a favorable ground to enable such alliances could be provided. The strengthening of political bonds is essential to discuss and define strategies to further act from the influential levels in the global, regional or national fields.

3. Practices and Discourses

As regards to movement construction, the FDs take advantage of several contributions according to the region where women come from. From the participants' perspective, Latin America is the region which contributes the most in terms of conceptual developments and political analyses but given its broadest organizational background, it is also the one contributing to the understanding of the movement and its complexities, not only in terms of agendas (where inequality is one of the strongest issues) but of strategies. According to the words of one of the participants, “its strong intellectual articulation and the development of some theoretical and conceptual stances on democracy, for example”. Latin women are regarded also as the feminists with the clearest understanding on global politics, if compared with feminists from other regions who are more absorbed by national and regional politics and among whom, starting from their own reality, the universal concept of WOMAN is broken to give way to the existence of WOMEN.

Asian women have been essential for analyzing the state and the type of confrontation they are holding therewith, tackling the boundaries of the Nation-State to meet the interests of populations and of women. They have also contributed to a conception on militarism which complements and enriches the discourse against fundamentalisms, as well as the vision of the diverse identities and particularly their analyses on racism and a very rich multi-ethnic perspective, based on the experience of subordination and exclusion originated in the existence of castes, among others.

On the other hand, African women - coming from a continent where poverty, illiteracy and AIDS epidemic, among other things, delimit a very particular context for the understanding of oppression and the definition of strategies - have carried to the discussions around democracy, for example, the need to discuss the issues of reproduction / redistribution in a global world from new perspectives. At the same time, many of them participate or are involved in state or power structures, so it is harder to elaborate a critical thinking in the face of the system. Yet, some feminist groups have built autonomous spaces, and after the First African Forum they have adopted a charter of feminist principles.

The participation of Europe and North America as regions in the FDs has been scarce. However, there are issues in common such as the condition of migrant women and human trafficking, and the acknowledgement that there is still a lot to be achieved despite the progress made for women in these democracies.

With democracy as the analytic framework, the FDs have discussed issues which, - just like neoliberal globalization, militarism and fundamentalisms- come across every women's circumstances of life. Women return to their regions carrying new perspectives which connect, for example, political bodies with body policies, reflecting the organizational power the FDs may have once put into practice in the national and local level.

Undoubtedly, the issue of the body is an essential space of struggle for feminists and, from a radical perspective, it is the core of the FDs' analyses on democracy.

One of the FDs' greatest assets has been to accomplish the participation of a vast number of women's networks and articulations throughout the world - and of feminist leaders present in an individual capacity - as well as a higher presence of women from diverse social track records. This has contributed to the encounter and dialogue of local, regional and global perspectives in discussions focused on defining the possibility of having a common ground, common strategies and a greater interaction with other social movements.

However, this richness causes tensions around the possible type of dialogue arising. While some participants believe that the broader the FDs the more opportunity there is to have an impact on the local sphere, others find this broadness to hamper the depth of dialogues around the feminist theory and strategies, preventing the actual amplification of feminist voices within the Forum, as well as the strengthening of the international movement in the development of their political thinking.

4. Methodological Aspects

As to the methodology, the FDs have been a unique space to test the virtual communication as a mechanism for the construction and discussion of thought. Considering the difficulties to finance regular meetings and the opportunities provided by technology, the FDs' Coordinating Group has been holding a set of weekly encounters (Chats). These virtual meetings - after overcoming some hurdles - have provided the opportunity to discuss both the agenda and other operational issues of the FDs as the creation of team works, registrations, funding as well as other matters more connected to the existence of a collective intellectual ground. It is in this space where the concept notes were conceived, which served as a basis for the FDs thematic discussions and which, in turn, proved that it is possible to include extremely complex

topics. Thus, it was urgent to decisively tackle the communication problems arising from the diverse languages, but also to systematically devote to the creation of a space to plan the FDs.

These forums for virtual discussion have also served to mature and enhance the FDs' meeting methodology itself. Dialogue to dialogue, the work in groups oriented to transregional discussions - aiming to facilitate translation - has been increasingly favored, so that debates around the axes proposed (neoliberalism, militarisms y fundamentalisms, in the context of radical democracy) be actually focused on understanding the impact all these circumstances have on the lives and bodies of women, wherever they be.

In evolutionary terms, it is in the III FDs where the "actual" dialogues among regions start to be established, partly thanks to translation. Work in groups has promoted a better acknowledgement of other realities and strategies and many feminists find it easier to establish common flags, address complaints and get support for certain local actions at the group level.

Though general plenary sessions still exist, they are basically focused on providing a frame for debates - rather than on setting stances - through theoretical elements and elements of political analysis suitable for leading discussions





within groups. These sessions, in turn, reflect the attempts for the collective construction of documents elaborated from all the networks involved in the CG.

As mentioned above, preliminary dialogues were held for the first time prior to the last FDs, conceived as a forum for the review of contents, methodology and organization of the FDs of Nairobi and, specifically, as a forum for theoretical discussion around the axes of analysis defined. They were also aimed at broadening the participation of the CG networks – adding five new ones – and at extending and consolidating the participation of the African feminists.

III. FDs' Achievements

This section intends to set out some of the specific benefits obtained from the FDs, both in strategic terms (i.e., in connection with the practices as a movement) and in practical terms in the interaction with other players (i.e., in the arguments with the WSF's more global framework).

For the movement

- Consolidation of an international autonomous space, called by the Southern feminists, for

discussion and dialogue among feminists throughout the world, from a global and national perspective. The relevance of having a forum for reflection and debate turns it into an achievement per se.

- The FDs are already regarded as a means to increase the power of the organizations, who find in the symbolic value of these global spaces a way to strengthen their movements and actions at the national levels.

- The dialogue within the Dialogues: the coordinating group has developed its own space for dialogue among a substantial number of networks and articulations from every region. Undoubtedly, this favors the construction of a collective thinking and of stances and perspectives more or less coincident. For example, this is evidenced in the concept notes circulating internationally.

- For the feminist movement, the recovery of the dimensions of sexuality and sexual diversity in the analyses on radical democracy in the frame of fundamentalisms, neoliberalism and militarisms.

- Acknowledgement of the relevance of understanding and analyzing the context and “translating” the languages, as bases for generating political stances in all the subjects (abortion, sexualities, democracy, etc.)

- Establishment and strengthening of relationships between the Southern networks - like the Campaign for the Convention - and some Asian networks; between AFM and Akshara Centre, etc.

With other players

- Creation of a space for impact and articulation with the WSF through the IC with the presence of women who simultaneously integrate the Coordinating Group of the FDs, providing them with a symbolic power that strengthens their stances in the negotiations and opens wider spaces for the feminist agenda.

- The benefit above has served to make the WSF start to acknowledge the relevance of debates on fundamentalism, although it has not yet been included as one of its dimensions.

- Inter-movement Dialogues as an expression of the FDs' strategic positioning – and specially of some networks of the CG – within the WSF broadest space.

- Actions implemented as FDs from Nairobi and co-organization of activities with the IC (Women March for Freedom, Feminist Tent for Youth, Controversy Panel, and a space created to collect and propose actions for 2007). This broad space of participation gave rise to a set of mobilization proposals around two agreed mottos: “Stop corporate control of women bodies, labour and sexuality” and “Defend women personal and social sovereignty”

- The presence of specific networks – such as AFM – in international discussion instances derived from the WSF, such as the Post-Neoliberal Agenda

IV. Tensions and challenges

This section intends to reflect on some aspects of the political practice, and analyze some fragilities, tensions and challenges of the FDs.

About tensions

- Undoubtedly, the different languages of the women attending the FDs represent one of the main elements of tension for this space. As long as it is not possible to translate languages and contexts appropriately it will not be possible to generate dialogues and debates in depth around the understanding of the situation of women in the various regions as well as to define strategies.

- To dialogue or to build movement? Or to build through dialogue? Should it be done in an increasingly wide and broad group with women from every social background, or in a group quantitatively smaller but in a deeper manner?

- The possibility discussed in the FDs' Coordinating Group of developing collective actions within the space of the WSF entails that actions and its objectives be discussed with the FDs group. It is intended that the impact on the Forum not be restricted to the women integrating the CG or to the actions they get to negotiate in the name of their organizations or networks, but that channels leading to define actions such as the FDs in a broader sense may be constructed.

- In this same line, another issue at stake is if the FDs should be a space of the feminist movement wherein the matters related to the movement be discussed, without restricting this encounter to the definition of strategies to have a bearing on the WSF with collective actions such as the FDs.

- It is added to the above the perception of some feminists who think that the higher impact on the Forum is achieved while it loses relevance as an open and inclusive space for the construction of alternatives to the neoliberal globalization model.

The higher attendance of political parties and government leaders in a civil society space defined as autonomous before the states or the attendance of Prolife groups with fundamentalist proposals are detrimental to women's human rights agenda. This tension reflects that it is still not clear how to articulate the sexism and racism claims raised by women in the Forum.



- Collective elaboration of concept notes creates difficulties, as the drafting between such geographically and politically diverse groups entails a major challenge. The search for consensus sometimes leads to the loss of consistence and clarity of the documents.

- Finally, why is the presence of Northern women almost unexistent in the FDs consolidation process? Have they been self-excluded? Have they been excluded in the process? In a positive sense, it may be a shift from the hegemonic perspective of the North on the ways of building feminisms to a perspective proposed from the South.

Some challenges

Below, we present in the manner of questions some of the issues which participants and organizers of the FDs believe to appear as challenges for a space which, from its diversity and autonomy, intends to generate strategies to face them from the movement and in alliance with other social movements.

- How can the FDs discussions (fundamentalisms, neoliberalism and militarisms from a perspective of radical democracy: impacts on women lives) as well as its concept notes be regularly disseminated?

- How can the FDs be made known to a higher number of women of different social backgrounds and among movements of every region, including Europe and North America?

- Have the changes made in the methodology, approaches and subjects of the FDs served to enhance and politize the discussions held in the FDs?

- How can the participation of more feminist leaders be efficiently increased, both in the FDs Coordinating Group and in the International Committee?

- How may "translation" be enhanced within the FDs in order to further deeper dialogues and progress in the definition of political action strategies, before the WSF and other international instances?



- Is it possible that the growth in the exchange of experiences and relationships (in conceptual and theoretical terms) so far achieved by the FDs organizing networks expand to a higher number of organizations and of women? Is it still an event too much focused on individual people rather than on their groups or networks?

- Should the FDs be a space wherefrom global campaigns be organized and promoted?

- Is it possible to conceive regional FDs to go more deeply into global analyses from a smaller group of women while tackling the debates on strategies?

- How can we make these dialogues more useful for women in their local backgrounds? ♦

1 The project "Feminist contributions to the new Latin American context" of the AFM is intended to systematize feminist advocacy experiences and to politically reflect about the practice at different levels. The Feminist Dialogues were the global space selected to analyze both the successful aspects of this experience and the political deficit and challenges posed thereby as well. This work contributes to the expansion of the debates of the AFM to other organizations and leaders by creating instruments that amplify the comprehension of these global practices.

2 This was the case of the Articulaci3n Feminista MARCOSUR and DAWN, for example.

3 There were 162 women attending in Mumbai, 260 in Porto Alegre (II FDs) and 220 in Nairobi



4 Ideas contained in this document are based on interviews both to participants and to members of the organizing committee of the FDs, as well as on the conclusions arisen from the II and III FDs and on the reading of available information such as publications, lectures and reports produced by the FDs. Interviews were carried out by the coordinating group to: Muthoni Wanyeki (FEMNET, Africa); Nandita Shah (NNAWG, India); Gina Vargas and Lucy Garrido (AFM, Latin America); Sunila Abeysekera (INFORM, Sri Lanka) and Wendy Harcourt (Europe). Among the participants, Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi (Africa); Marta López (Spain); Lydia Alpizar (Latin America) and Line Bareiro (Latin America) were interviewed.

5 Gouws A. Ways of Being: Feminist Activism and Theorizing at the Global Feminist Dialogues in Porte Alegre, Brazil, 2005. In Journal of International Women's Studies. Women's Bodies, Gender Analysis, and Feminist Politics at the World Social Forum.

6 According to feminists from other regions of the world, feminist meetings in Latin America are seen as extraordinary spaces for encounter, the background of which (almost thirty years) has not been consolidated in the other regions.

7 During the WSF 2007, a series of activities were called by many of the networks integrating the FDs: the Feminist Tent for Youth; the Women March for Freedom and the Controversial Dialogues on Anti-war Movements and Fundamentalisms.

8 The CG was initially integrated by 7 organizations and is currently composed of 12 networks/organizations: Articulación Feminista Marcosur, Inform, NNAWG, DAWN, WISEJ, Isis Manila, FEMNET, Akina Mama wa África-AmWA united in one, The Caribbean and Latin American Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights- CLADEM, Latin American and Caribbean Youth Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights- REDLAC, Network of Popular Education Between Women of Latin America and the Caribbean -REPEM, Women Living Under Muslim Laws - WLUML, and Women in Development -WIDE.

9 The inter-movement dialogues came up as an initiative of some of the organizations members of the CG of the FDs. They are carried out successfully and are widely recognized within the space of the WSF. As their name indicates, they have served to create spaces for discussion and dialogue among different social movements with the purpose of understanding how the issues of other social movements can be integrated as part of the agendas of each one of the participating movements.

10 It's no wonder that 10 Feminist Meetings were held in Latin America, and instances like the AFM (integrated by leaders and organizations working together for over 20 years to generate a current of thought) have been a milestone for the creation of the FDs and for the presence of feminist voices in the WSF, through the IC, for example.

11 For example, several concept papers were drafted at the first FDs (the intersection between globalization and fundamentalisms, challenging global and local division; sexual and reproductive rights), revealing the effort to gather subjects that are generally dealt with separately at the WSF. Barbara Klugman. Possibilities for Alliance-building for sexual and reproductive rights. In the Journal of International Women's Studies. Women's Bodies, Gender Analysis, and Feminist Politics at the World Social Forum.

Changes in governmental political elites in the countries of the block have generated expectation in the societies, situating in the political scenario the dimensions of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights which were almost vanished in the neoliberal age. This scenario opens spaces for the search of new processes of economic and social integration, based on redistributive policies, revalorization of the role of the State and a new generation of social policies. This is undoubtedly a controversial scenario, as the progressist and left-based rhetoric coexists with macroeconomic stability policies, based on an aggressive agro-exporter policy, favored in the last period by international commodity prices.

Regional integration is now at a crossroads; the asymmetries among countries and the emergence of binational conflicts - as the one between Uruguay and Argentina for the installation of Botnia pulp mill - have posed serious difficulties to progress in the search of new processes of regional integration.

In the upcoming years, this context will create new fields of political action for the organizations and social movements of the region, reopening the debate about the alternatives for sustainable development, energetic matrix and resignification of regional integration and democracy.

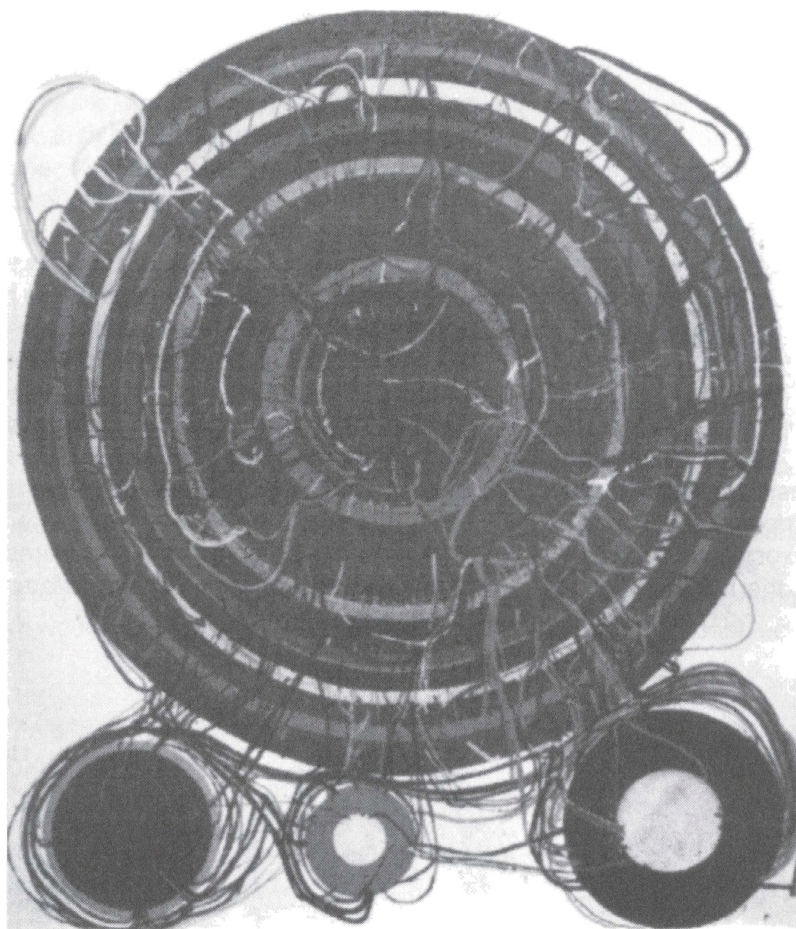
Is it worth promoting regional integration?

Is it legitimate to talk about citizenship in relation to a sociopolitical process of eminently economic integration as MERCOSUR? Is it worth to dispute and promote "other" MERCOSUR, different from the "actually existing"?

The institutional MERCOSUR, its meetings, structure, conflicts and negotiations, represents a specific field followed by a limited group of players involved; yet, according to Jelín, the MERCOSUR is starting to function as a new setting or framework for the activities - dialogues, exchanges, meetings and conflicts - among different social actors and agents. (Jelín 2000, p 260)

Women in the process of regional integration

Lilian Celiberti



That "framework" brings about many exchanges, it establishes a rich array of productions and analyses, providing a regional character to the same subjects beyond their possible institutional insertion. The MERCOSUR process has serious social, democratic, and participation deficits. It is not exclusively about the existence or not of participation spaces but about the subjects and debates that are being promoted. The main challenge still lies in how to extend integration debates to the societies, while denouncing the violation of rights or the negative impacts of policies on social, economic, cultural and environmental rights.

Citizen participation within MERCOSUR

In the document "Analyses and proposals on citizen participation within MERCOSUR", Beatriz Leandro and Cecilia Alemany express that the study of the subject matter requires the consideration of:

- a) participation spaces at the national level for MERCOSUR issues.
- b) transparency mechanisms at the MERCOSUR level, and
- c) formal participation spaces within MERCOSUR and the vision the own players have about it.

With comings and goings, since 2005 it is more openly discussed about the direction of the integration process involving the governments. WE ARE MERCOSUR ("Somos MERCOSUR") is a public initiative launched by Uruguay pro-tempore presidency in 2005, sponsored by FESUR. It aimed at getting citizens involved in the regional integration process, by creating new spaces where the civil society and the local governments may debate, formulate demands and participate in decision-making processes.

This initiative of Uruguay was adopted by governments of the other countries of MERCOSUR thus originating a regional space constituted by governmental representatives of all countries. The Bulletin was first edited in 2006 and the Web page of We Are Mercosur (SOMOS MERCOSUR) was launched. (www.somosmercosur.org)

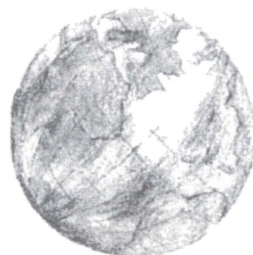
MERCOSUR Social Summit (Brasilia 2006)

The MERCOSUR Social Summit is an initiative launched by Brazil in its capacity as pro-tempore presidency of MERCOSUR. With the aim of extending and strengthening citizen participation in the regional integration process it calls to the I MERCOSUR Social Summit to be held in Brasilia at the end of the 2006.

Organized by some thirty social, cultural, labor union and students' organizations of the region and coordinated by the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, the Brasilia Summit gathered citizens from diverse cultural, economic, political and social spheres of the block. It ratified the Social Agenda arising from the I Meeting for a Productive and Solidary MERCOSUR, held in July, 2006, in Córdoba, Argentina.

The main goals of these instances of encounter and citizenship-building are to extend social participation in the framework of MERCOSUR, to propose an environmental agenda for the block, to promote a political, productive and cultural MERCOSUR, to have an influence on the regional political agenda, to inform and train MERCOSUR's citizens, and to continue deepening the program WE ARE MERCOSUR.

Presidents of all member-countries of the block gathered in the XXXII Summit of Presidents of MERCOSUR - held in the city of Rio de Janeiro in January, 2007 -, enthusiastically welcomed the Brasilia Summit and accepted the proposal for Social Summits to become a permanent activity of social movements to be held in the frame of the meetings of the MERCOSUR Presidents.



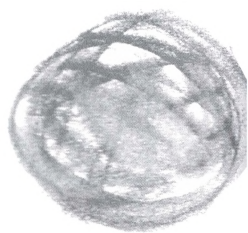
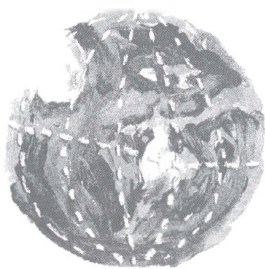
Social and Women's Movements: toward a gender agenda in MERCOSUR

Since the MERCOSUR was established, feminist NGOs engaged in the analysis of the women's employment issue, trade unionists, UNIFEM and FLACSO have endeavored to include the consideration of the Gender dimension within the integration process. At that time, initiatives were addressed to the Sub-Group 11, which dealt with labor relations, employment and social security. In evaluating the efforts made, FLACSO and UNIFEM perceived the relative ignorance and otherness of women's organizations towards MERCOSUR and decided to implement an information and sensitization forum in order to increase women's participation.

In 1995, and before to the IV United Nations Conference (July 31 – August 2), the first analysis seminar of women in the MERCOSUR was held in the venue of PARLATINO in São Paulo. This and other initiatives developed in that period gave way to the Specialized Meeting of Women (REM) in the institutionality of MERCOSUR.

For the IV UN Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in September, 1995, the Regional Coordination of NGOs of Latin America and The Caribbean promoted a panel about "The Processes of Regional Integration and their Impact on Women". According to Marcia Rivera, there are three dimensions to approach in the integration processes ongoing in the region:

1. One that affects women particularly relates to population territorial movements and especially to the creation of markets of domestic women workers. Without "free circulation of people" there are countries that "export" domestic women workers, such as Paraguay and Bolivia to Argentina; Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico; El Salvador to USA, among other trades. There is also a trade in prostitution, but it calls for a deeper study.
2. Will the questions opened by new consumption patterns and the cultural impact of the integration processes strengthen the processes for an integration with sustainable and equitable human development?
3. The need for opening a specific reflection about political processes and women's insertion. "Integration will demand the conception of new forms of representation, regional or sub-regional parliaments, specialized commissions, etc., where the leadership of women's movement would be indispensable. For that purpose, we need to work hard in a two-tier structure: defining potential ways to rebuild the political arena in order to guarantee an adequate women's representation, and working with women to get them interested and trained in the political work at the regional level, that has obviously different logic and requirements for which training is required".



These three work axes proposed in 1995 found no continuity neither in the institutionality of Gender of MERCOSUR (always marginal with respect to the general course of integration) nor in the women's movement which, after the Beijing Conference, devoted its efforts to foster national agendas to implement the Platform of Action arising from the IV UN Conference on Women.

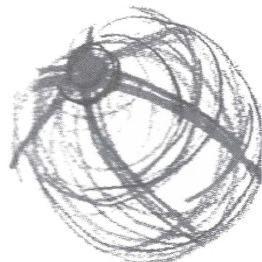
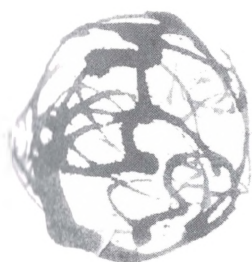
It has not been easy for the women's movement to engage in the MERCOSUR negotiation process, even in the light of innumerable exchanges, debates, seminars and studies that have contributed elements of reflection and analysis about gender relationships in the countries of the block. The institutional MERCOSUR remains as a narrow space for the incorporation of new social agendas; however, this is a favorable time to articulate agendas from issues already existing in some institutional fields of MERCOSUR, such as the one of active policies for the promotion of a decent employment, the sexual and reproductive rights, the struggles against racism and the creation of new institutional mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Regional Relationships of the Feminist Movement and the Institutionality of Gender within MERCOSUR

From 1995 to 2000, the bonds between the feminist and women's organizations and the governmental instances, Offices or Secretariats devoted to the implementation of the World Platform of Action, had deepened; yet, the agenda of the Specialized Meeting on Women of MERCOSUR (REM) remains on the sidelines of these interactions. The MERCOSUR Women's Forum is in fact the only organization that continuously participates in the REM until 2001.

In the frame of a new political context in the countries and the debate on the participation of women's organizations in the REM, the Women's Commission of the Southern Cone Trade Union Offices' Coordinator, the Gender and Trade Network, the Articulación Feminista Mercosur, and CLADEM created a working party to articulate proposals directed to the REM. The debate included the principal current tensions and contradictions of the integration process and the role of the civil society in this context.

The primary defined objective is to promote a regional agenda of the REM to influence the MERCOSUR integration process, which would concern:



1. To extend citizen participation in the process of MERCOSUR regional integration and include gender equity in the debate about integration policies.
2. To boost women's advocacy in integration processes and in the defense of their Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
3. To improve the skills and knowledge of women's organizations to incorporate gender equality into the debates about regional integration.

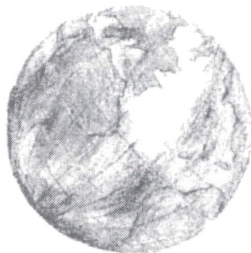
To strengthen this perspective entails combining the regional and national work and, particularly, strengthening the capacity of horizontal articulation of women's movements, networks and organizations of the civil society with other spaces of MERCOSUR.

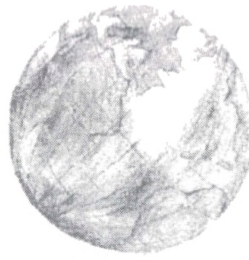
The strategies defined by women's organizations articulate with the actions of ministers and directors of governmental offices, especially in Brazil and Uruguay, sponsored by UNIFEM Southern Cone, aiming at progressing in the influence of women in the MERCOSUR.

AFM strategies

I. To consolidate the arena of the regional players for advocacy actions

The Meeting of Articulación Feminista Marcosur held in Paraguay in August, 2005 resolved the creation of a working party to influence the regional integration process of MERCOSUR. The AFM is a regional articulation for political actions; however, the challenge still lies in how to articulate the levels of local and national action with the regional space. To introduce the feminist advocacy as an objective in the MERCOSUR involves articulating actions at the regional and national level simultaneously. Women's movements in each of the countries are hardly involved in institutional, economic and social issues of MERCOSUR.





In order to consolidate a regional field of action, we decided to create a space for alliances within MERCOSUR with other feminist and women's organizations, composed of trade unionists, NGOs and feminist networks of the countries integrating MERCOSUR, so as to define and implement strategies of influence on the institutionality of MERCOSUR.

The first articulation meeting between feminist networks to define common strategies toward MERCOSUR was held in Montevideo in 2005, with the participation of the Women's Committee of the Southern Cone Trade Union Offices' Coordinator, the Gender and trade Network, Articulaci3n Feminista Marcosur, CLADEM, and the Director of the National Institute of Women of Uruguay.

The debate presented the main current tensions and contradictions of the integration process and the role of the civil society in this context, including a review of the main axes developed since 1995 in the women's movement of the countries of MERCOSUR. This debate brought about work definitions that placed the strengthening of the Specialized Meeting of Women of MERCOSUR (REM) as a key element for the development of a regional agenda.

Since 1998, the REM has tackled the traditional issues related to women's movements (particularly, domestic and sexual violence) but it has not achieved the status of an instance for gender perspective influence in the integration process. The possibilities for reaching a common strategy are favored by the current situation in Brazil and Uruguay, countries in which the governmental mechanisms have the express intention to strengthen this initiative within MERCOSUR.

Some axes of work to be promoted were defined:

Institutionality

- To promote a new regulation of the REM offering a privileged frame of participation to civil society networks.
- To further the creation of a permanent Technical Secretariat of the REM to continue with the relationship with other spaces of MERCOSUR and with civil society organizations.
- To progress in a regional insight on the problems and agendas.
- To visibilize the gender issue within MERCOSUR.



Influence areas

- Working party for employment growth
- Mercosur Parliament
- Municipal Consultative Forum (local governments group)
- Social Development and Human Rights.

2. REM Institutional Strengthening

It was resolved to promote the creation of a Technical Secretariat for the REM to facilitate an articulated work between meetings. New rules for performance were approved facilitating the participation of the civil society organized through regional networks; likewise, permanent interaction mechanisms were approved.

UNIFEM has supported this strategy and will finance the installation of the secretariat.

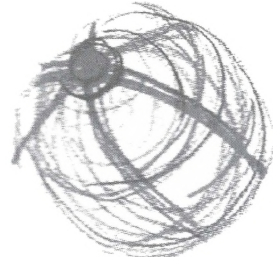
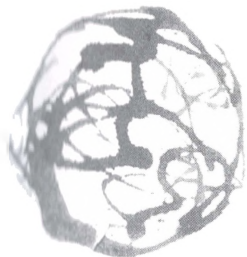
In drafting the Agenda, it was agreed to establish employment as the REM priority issue to be promoted for 2006. To achieve this goal, the AFM developed two activities: a document about employment policies in MERCOSUR and an analysis of the legal framework on domestic work in the MERCOSUR countries, including Bolivia and Chile.

3. Employment policies for Women in MERCOSUR

The AFM, in furthering this work, sought to introduce the employment issue in the core of women's movement agenda within the frame of the Equality Plans promoted by the governments of the region. The strategy of action sought to progress effectively in the articulation of national and regional policies. One of the difficulties encountered by social movements is precisely the constant articulation of strategies and actions containing both dimensions simultaneously. Although great progress has been made in the identity and sense of belonging of the organization, this challenge is crucial for an articulation like the AFM, because the political articulation of the national and regional space is a tension that requires a specific articulation work.

When defining an agenda both as a national objective of the countries and as a goal determined by the MERCOSUR governments, it is possible to further the advocacy in the national and the regional concurrently. This entails the development of new work guidelines, the creation of national and regional leaderships simultaneously and the inclusion of women's movements as players within MERCOSUR.

The agenda for the promotion of employment in MERCOSUR has been defined as an axis in the block; yet, the equality of opportunities has not been considered with the required centrality, as 40% of the EAP in MERCOSUR are women, who are most affected by unemployment and informality and whose income is lower than men's, regardless of the increase in their education levels.



Therefore, the drafting of this document is a first step in the development of a strategy that should generate better advocacy conditions for women's organizations in MERCOSUR in the medium term.

Strategy Redefinition

The creation of the regional working party integrated by the Women's Commission of the Southern Cone Trade Union Offices' Coordinator, the Gender and Trade Network, CLADEM and the AFM to forward shared strategies to have an influence on the MERCOSUR particularly invigorates the REM. However, we need to work in each national and regional space to build actual action strategies for advocacy.

We decided to carry out a research on the legal rules for remunerated domestic work in the countries of MERCOSUR with the intention of progressing in this issue. Although we already have a theoretical document about gender and employment, it is indispensable to approach the subject emphasizing women's discrimination as the axis of the employment debate.

4. Legal Rules on domestic work in the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile

Domestic work has always been subject to a particular legal regulation with less recognition of rights than other workers. This differentiated statute applied to domestic service establishes exceptions to the social labor protection accomplished by the trade union movement.

As described by Hugo Valiente and Milena Pereira in the research, these "exceptions" express deeply rooted social and cultural prejudices which are allegedly based on arguments such as: "the economic unproductiveness of domestic work, the specific conditions of the workers derived from class differences, the deep-seated social practices applied as a law, the difficulties for supervising the work in view of the inviolability of domicile, the protection of the family prevailing against labor rights, the existence of additional economic aspects in labor remunerations, the assertion that it does not constitute a labor relationship, the emotional and quasi familiar relation with the employer, etc. Likewise, it was appointed the scarce or null significance that the theory of social law has given to this branch of the economic".

In Latin America, most of the female labor force is employed in domestic work, with a 15,2% participation in the structure of non-agriculture employment of women, thus evidencing an upward trend in the period 1990-2002, particularly in the Southern Cone, and significantly in Brazil and Paraguay, where domestic work occupies one in five women. (Pereira, Valiente, 2006)



In the nineties, 70% of new jobs in Latin America were generated by the informal sector and, 22 in 100 new jobs for women between 1990 and 1998 corresponded to the remunerated domestic service, the most precarious work within the informal sector (Abramo and Valenzuela, 2001:46).

Domestic work is definitely a women's sector that expresses the labor segregation of women. Association of domestic work with "care" tasks originally attributed to women by the patriarchal culture has - even from the legislative point of view - led societies to make a difference between the productive work and the remunerated work carried out by a woman (in general) in the domicile of other woman (in general).


Ethnic and racial dimensions are relevant in the constitution of the mass of domestic workers, especially in Brazil and Bolivia. Accordingly, national origin is important in Chile and Argentina, where the majority of the Bolivian and Paraguayan migrant female labor force, respectively, is concentrated. (Pereira, Valiente, 2006)

The legal rules express social consensus and the "common senses of citizens" about rights and social protection. Notwithstanding the major changes occurred in the last 25 years in the region, domestic work remains as a stronghold of the patriarchal preconceptions.

For a feminist articulation like the AFM, to include remunerated domestic work as a field of political action entails to undertake diversity and inequality among women as a strategic field of action for social transformation. Betania Ávila said in the X Feminist Meeting in Latin America: "if feminism in Latin America and The Caribbean does not fight against women's poverty, there is no chance for it to radicalize. If it does not deal with land democratization and women's access to that right, no radicalization is possible. If it does not face the right to our own body, there is no radicalization. Feminism needs to become popular, extend to all places where women are explored and violated, creating roots as a political organization devoted to social transformation".

It was from a perspective of the feminist political praxis as a space of political empowerment - both collective and individual - that we decided to continue in this line of work around two axes:

a) the strengthening of the organization and associativity of domestic workers and



b) the advocacy toward MERCOSUR Parliament, aiming at generating a legislation for social protection.



Given the particular characteristics of domestic work, the workers' organization structures are very weak and have restricted possibilities of affiliation in relation with the sector. Helping to increase its public visibility becomes a strategic goal in order to effectively extend the exercise of rights.

5. Migrant women and domestic workers in MERCOSUR countries

The inclusion of the domestic work as one of the political axes for advocacy in the MERCOSUR Parliament created in 2007 and the definition of a field of alliances within the women's movement encouraged us to carry out an advertising campaign to connect domestic work conditions to women migration streams. With the intention to "Disseminate the life conditions of thousands of migrant women – from the perspective of economic, social and cultural human rights – in order to address the issue to the decision-makers – Governments, Ministries, Parliaments, Institutions of MERCOSUR, etc. – and to the agendas of the women, feminist and human rights movements of our region " a set of spots/ animations, sponsored by OXFAM, were produced and circulate by e-mail among social organizations, NGOs, trade unions and the media.

Data and analyses disclosed from reliable sources (CEPAL, UNFPA, OIM, etc.) served as the basis to visibilize the subject under review. The wording of the texts, both for the animations and for the draft of the video script, was discussed and agreed with Oxfam in order to determine the "place of the speaker", i.e., the perspective, the tone, the messages and the specific audience the campaign would be addressed to.

The stage of pre-production (search for documents, photographs, images, music, etc), creation, design and production of animations started once the texts were approved. While the video script was being drafted and produced, in agreement with Oxfam, there started the distribution of animations via e-email (once a week). For this purpose, the AFM elaborated a list of 6.200 e-mail addresses with non-governmental organizations including networks of women and



feminists, young people and human rights, civil society articulations of Mercosur countries, Parliaments, universities, the media, etc. Oxfam also distributed animations through its address book: (<http://www.youtube.com/MujeresMigrantes> and in the newspaper “Mujeres en Red”: http://www.mujiresenred.net/article.php3?id_article=1196).

Contacts were established to distribute the material to networks of journalists in Spain and other Spanish speaking places.

Challenges



Since 2005, the AFM has promoted a steady work toward the institutionality of MERCOSUR, primarily participating in the Specialized Meeting of Women of MERCOSUR and in the meeting of “High authorities competent in Human Rights” as well as in the MERCOSUR Social Summits.

Although all feminist and women's organizations carry out advocacy actions toward national governments, the regional dimension and the governments' policy within it are hardly present and is only expressed in a few advocacy actions. It is necessary to deepen the debate on integration processes and especially in the MERCOSUR, in each feminist space integrating the AFM, and particularly to advance in the articulation of both the national and the regional dimension simultaneously.

Citizen participation in MERCOSUR is still rhetorical rather than actual, notwithstanding the implementation of the MERCOSUR Social Summit since the end of 2006.

We have visualized two subjects (employment policy and remunerated domestic work) that may facilitate an articulation between the national and the regional dimension of advocacy policies. The main challenge is to develop a strategy that may allow more organizations and players to get involved in this agenda at the national level and that it be more visible in the public arena.

Local feminist spaces and organizations are facing a time of profound transformation as there is an emergence of new organizations and feminist leaders in mixed organizations that require new alliances and action strategies. The feminist movement as such is a space that influences symbolically on the public sphere rather than an organizational space capable of gathering the diversity of groups and individuals self-defined as feminists ♦



In June, 2007, a collective action promoted by the Uruguayan feminism had an immediate impact on the political system. Its most significant effect was the breaking of the blockade imposed to the debate about decriminalization of abortion since the Frente Amplio Party took up the government in March, 2005.

On June 1, 2007 there started an atypical citizen mobilization which ended with the discussion and approval –in the Commission Of Health of the Senate of the Republic– of a bill that includes the relative decriminalization of abortion.

This activist practice was outstanding to the extent that it allowed the social individual who aborts to massively and explicitly take the floor.

The action was triggered off by a solidarity act promoted by a group of organizations and people when it was made public that a woman had been convicted and charged with “crime of abortion” by the Criminal Court.

The answer to the above was to create a “Blog” on the Internet where those interested could publicly accept that they had an abortion¹. From then on, there are some 9,000 people who, speaking in first person and identifying themselves, state to have committed the same crimes for which “the 20-year old woman” was convicted.

A comprehensive look at the “background” of abortion as an unsolvable conflict in the Uruguayan society will facilitate the analysis of this experience as a contribution to the feminist tradition and debate.

Frame of reference for practice analysis

In the introduction of the first edition of “Male Domination” (*La dominación masculina*) Pierre Bourdieu admits “...having been amazed at what one might call the paradox of the *doxa*: the fact that the order of the world (...) is ‘broadly speaking’ respected, that there are no more transgressions and subversions, crimes and ‘madnesses’ (...) that the established order, with its relations of domination, its rights and prerogatives, its privileges and its injustices, perpetuates so very easily (...) and that the most intolerable conditions of existence may often appear as acceptable and even natural..”²

The struggles to exercise the right to abortion voluntarily and in conditions compatible with human dignity represent one of those “transgressions or subversions” against the “order of the world” and the [male] “domination relations”, the little frequency of which amazed Bordieu.

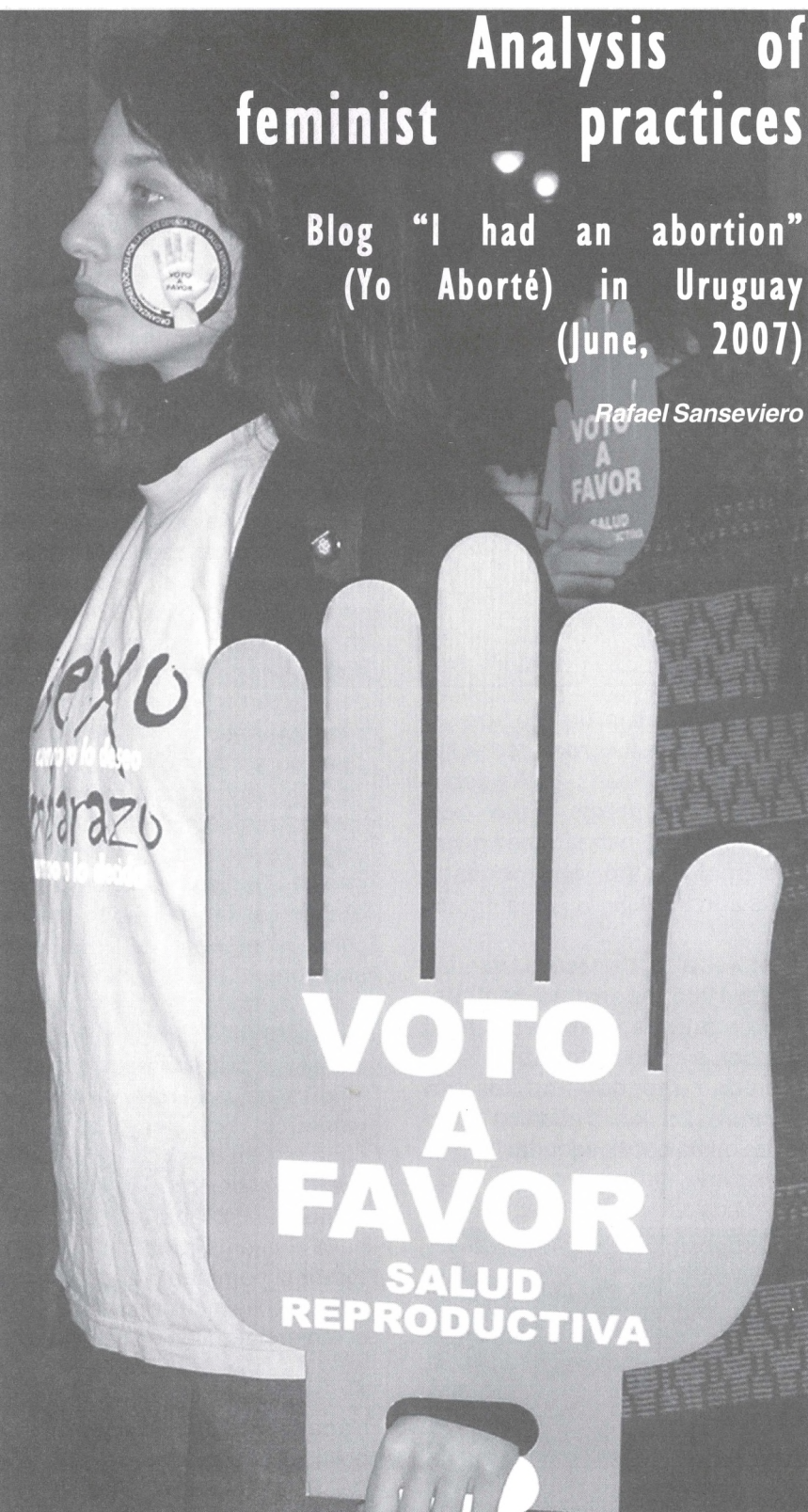
As from the sixties, the demand for the decriminalization of voluntary abortion was a sign of identity of feminist and the women’s rights movements. The statement of abortion as a right refutes, among others, the dichotomic symbolic order between the public and the private, the woman-mother homologation, the depolitization of the body and the interdiction of the non-reproductive sexuality for women³.

It questions the acceptance of the biological difference as the foundation for social inequality and

Analysis of feminist practices

Blog “I had an abortion”
(Yo Aborté) in Uruguay
(June, 2007)

Rafael Sanseviero



humanizes the female subject by interposing the exercise of her will between the biological event (pregnancy) and the social event (maternity).

It represents a libertarian assertion that demands the equality of rights from the recognition of the biological and cultural difference.

In that respect, the struggle for the decriminalization of abortion furthered by feminists may be considered one of the foundational actions - both in the discursive and the political - of a process for broadening the range of human rights to be recognized by the International Law of Human Rights in future decades⁴.

In Latin America, the demands for the decriminalization of abortion were incorporated -with different emphases- to the debates on the contents of the "new democracies" in the framework of the post-dictatorial processes (80s and 90s).

That was also the case of Uruguay from 1985 on, when feminist organizations - while political freedoms were being restored - included the demand for the decriminalization of abortion as an issue of the public agenda.

Voluntary Abortion: regulations, social practice and the pendulum

Uruguay evidences some singularities in the way the "political society" managed, during the last 70 years, the transitions from an hegemonic discourse that condemns the voluntary abortion and the woman who aborts and the abortion practitioner (regulations level), to the great factual tolerance for the satisfaction of the collective need for abortions (practice level).

The voluntary abortion is characterized as a crime since 1889, except for a period of four years in which it was completely decriminalized, from 1934 to 1938; then it was criminalized again through the promulgation of Law No. 9.763. Yet, the magnitude and characteristics of the voluntary abortion practices present it as a socially legitimated strategy for reproduction control. According to the most accurate estimates, the rate of abortion would be 38.5%, that is to say that one in four conceptions ends up in voluntary abortion. A very high proportion of those abortions is carried out by means of medicalized procedures (80%), i.e. procedures with a medicine-based legitimacy or that are carried out through the intervention of personnel qualified in the health area⁵. Therefore, even in the clandestinity, abortion practices have elements in common with the existing dominant tendencies to collective life medicalization and the commercialization of medicine.

A feature that prevailed throughout decades is the incapacity of political agencies to present a *final* "State discourse" in relation with





voluntary abortion. The political system shows a *pendular* discursive and regulatory pattern with the characteristic that each liberalizing movement is immediately followed by another movement that compensates it in the opposite direction and vice-versa. Some paradigmatic expressions of this pendular discursive-regulatory process are mentioned below just by way of example:

a) The Decree of January, 1935 prohibiting the interruption of pregnancy at the request of the woman “in public hospitals”, exactly one month after the decriminalization of abortion in December, 1934;

b) Law No. 9.763 that qualifies abortion as a crime under Article 1, establishes several grounds for penalty exemption in certain qualified abortions under Article 2, and stipulates under Article 3 that a Judge cannot charge a doctor with this crime without the mediation of a complex bureaucratic process.

c) In May 2004 the Senate of the Republic, under the direct pressure of the President of the Republic, voted against a bill that

decriminalizes voluntary abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy; three months later, the same Executive Power issued a government order (Order 369/04 of the Ministry of Public Health) prescribing the obligatory nature of providing advice to women requesting abortions and hospital care to those who already had aborted.

d) During the last 3 years the government intervened aggressively to restrict the access of women to Misoprostol, a drug presented under Order 369/04 of the Ministry of Public Health as one of the abortion methods qualified as “non-risky” based on the recommendations of PAHO-WHO (Pan American Health Organization- World Health Organization). Order 369 is based on the paradigm of risk and damage reduction.

The regulatory and legal “pendulum” is the juridical expression of the Uruguayan “culture” that condemns, tolerates and denies abortion; this *culture* is a social praxis where the conflict between the hegemonic discursive levels and the satisfactions of the collective need of abortions converge.

Abortion is a right that lacks a significant social individual who demands it openly

It is highly relevant to take into account that such frame of tolerant condemn and denial of abortion enables Uruguayan women to satisfy their need for abortions and the same time constitutes a symbolic and material scenario where several rights recognized in the International Law of Human Rights are seriously damaged.

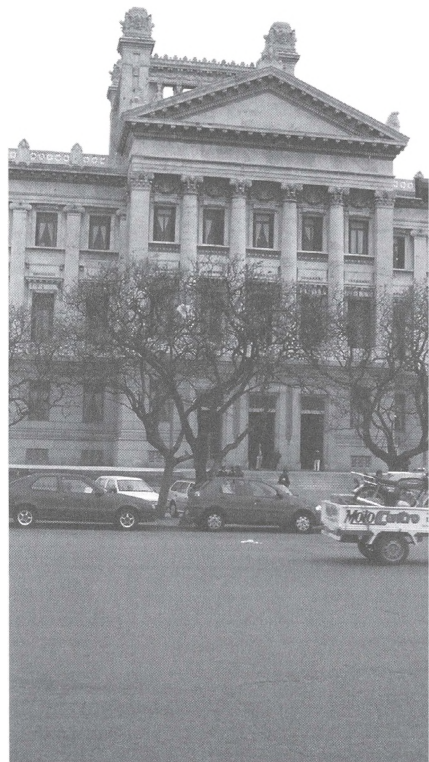
When a woman aborts voluntarily, she is "transcending the hegemonic representations of the feminine", including the interdiction to non-reproductive sexuality and the woman-mother homologation ⁶.

But when aborting "clandestinely" and forced to invisibilize her abortion, (an act considered a moral stigma and subject to criminal penalty), the woman is compelled to deny a crucial component of her identity.

The tolerant condemn and the denial of abortion represent an ideological matrix that reproduces female subordination and discrimination, regardless of the fact that in the social praxis women find the conditions necessary to satisfy their need to interrupt the pregnancy.

Thus, voluntary abortion is a "social event" happening within a material and symbolically marginal space. It is a mass practice whose 'decriminalization' has been demanded repeatedly without the presence of a significant social individual demanding the visibility and the current or potential identity of "I, the one who aborts or would abort"⁷.

This situation is paradigmatically expressed to the extent that the broadest social consensus regarding the possibility of decriminalization of abortion was built on a strongly biomedical foundation, as the incidence of "maternal" morbi-mortality derived from "risky abortions" ⁸. This was especially materialized since 2002, when the House of Representatives discussed and approved a Bill for



the Defense of the Reproductive Health which included the decriminalization of abortion that was finally rejected by the Senate of the Republic in May, 2004⁹.

Ever since, and despite the efforts made by some feminist organizations to widen the visibility

of the different rights affected by the criminalization of the abortion, the emphasis on “maternal mortality” and the “sanitary” approach of abortion as a social issue were dominant.

Another peculiarity to be considered is that on a few occasions the feminists and women’s movements played a leading role in the debates in favor of abortion decriminalization. Actually, the contents of the

Commission with significant representation for the “Defense of the Criminal Code” (from which the crime of abortion had been excluded in 1934)¹⁰.

The feminist historian Graciela Sapriza states that the debate that took place from 1934 to 1938 about criminalization of abortion can be summed up in “...three decades of a debate around the body [where] love, sexuality, free disposition and control of the body are the terms of a special confrontation that refer – ultimately- to the conflict between the individual and the collective (...) this conflict will constitute the core of the debates and arguments articulating the different discourses about the private life, the intimate relations...”. In characterizing the participating voices she states: “The proposals of feminist women were one, the medical and eugenist discourse is perhaps their privileged interlocutor, yet it shares the same space with the relatively orthodox Catholic, that of “freethinkers” and progressist politicians”¹¹.

The enactment of Law No. 9.763 in 1938 set forth the juridical basis for the consolidation of the cultural context of tolerant condemn and denial of abortion within which the legal medical discourse becomes hegemonic based on Article 1 of the Law, condemning voluntary abortion, the woman who aborts and the abortion practitioner.

Nevertheless, the tension between the regulations level and the social practice level lobbies the agencies - especially the state and sanitary ones - always resulting in initiatives that from different approaches and social places, refute -even relatively- the decriminalization of abortion.

struggles related to the legal status of abortion were always in dispute.

And so it was in the period immediately previous to the *re-criminalization* of abortion in 1938, when the feminists of the time shared the scenario with a broad range of players who acted from a



A singular expression of that *tension* took place in 1979, still under dictatorship. At that time, there was a “movement” triggered by a group of Officers of the Police Headquarters of Montevideo assigned to the repression of clandestine abortion, who submitted a “memorandum” to their superiors explaining the “impossibility of repression”. This resulted in a “Draft Bill” drafted by a “Special Commission” integrated by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and the School of Law. The draft bill has never been discussed in the Council of State¹²; however, it represents an extraordinarily important conceptual background, considering that the radicality of some of its statements in demanding the right of women to abort was never again repeated¹³.

The peculiarity is that this draft bill was explicitly intended to “put an end to the practice of clandestine abortion”. Yet, its articles drastically resolve the conflict of interests between the legally protected rights in favor of women. Let’s analyze just three examples:

- a) “The voluntary interruption of pregnancy is hereby established as a “private right” exercisable voluntarily by women up to 90 days of pregnancy without any further justification other than their own will;
- b) A programmatic article obliges the Ministry of Public Health to guarantee the interruption of pregnancies;
- c) Some requirements are expressly established to avoid interferences between the decision and the performance of abortions, for all women of whatever condition.

So, for underage women it is provided that the judges shall mandatorily grant their consent or will support their denial, and for married women, “that the husband must be informed of the decision of his wife”¹⁴.

Immediately after the recovery of democracy, the Representatives of the Colorado Party Daniel Lamas and Víctor Vaillant (1985) proposed to return to the situation established in 1934, thus eliminating the crime of abortion from the Criminal Code.

During the following legislative periods (1993-94; 1998; 2002, 2006) many bills were presented, including the relative decriminalization of abortion and each of them reached an increasing level of consensus. Coincidentally with the broadening of political and social basis supporting the said bills, a *conceptual and discursive subordination* of the radical decriminalization of abortion was consolidated within the most complex framework of health and reproductive rights and finally the sexual and reproductive rights.

At the international level, this process is closely related to the extraordinary successes achieved during the eighties and the nineties

by feminists to consolidate in the agenda of transnational agencies and entities the demand for sexual and reproductive rights as the crucial dimensions of new citizenships.

At the national level, there is the impact of the increasing incidence of medication abortion as a strategy to manage the need for abortions, especially due to the dissemination of Misoprostol. But also, and quite particularly, there is an outstanding renewed predominance of male and female professionals of the health sector, who start to participate directly as political agents in the debate about abortion decriminalization. Their presence adds legitimacy to the demand for a legal change but it simultaneously confines the right to abortion to a symbolic space subordinated to health needs; very far removed from the contents of the debate in the 30s referred to by Sapriza.

The “progressist disciplinment”

In December, 2002 the House of Representatives passed a Bill for the Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Health (including the relative decriminalization of abortion). In May, 2004 the bill was rejected by the Senate of the

Republic under the pressure of President Jorge Batlle, who threatened to “veto” in case the Senators ratified it¹⁵.

That political experience was adopted by the recently elected progressist President Tabaré Vázquez, who, in February, 2005, after a meeting with the authorities of the Catholic University, announced that he would also veto any bill of abortion decriminalization. The first result of his statement was the exclusion of a bill for the Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Health from the official legislative agenda of the new government¹⁶.

From these actions, there was an express collective disciplinment that influenced all promoters of the debate in favor of abortion decriminalization, having also an impact on the civil organized society.

The above was especially expressed in the National Coordination of Social Organizers for the Defense of the Sexual and Reproductive Health (CNOOSSDSSR), a successful initiative of feminists and organizations who struggle for the women’s rights in order to create a

socially legitimated interlocutor before the political system during the parliamentary debate in the Senate (2003-2004).

One of the main merits of the CNOOSSDSSR

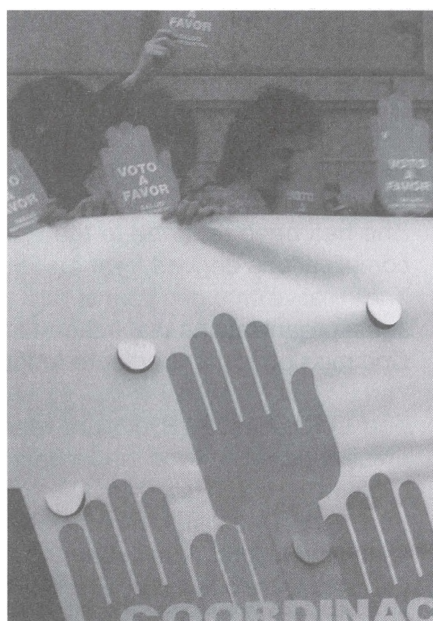


was to articulate an inclusive discourse of diverse social players in favor of sexual and reproductive rights and the relative decriminalization of abortion (sectors connected to medicine, the trade union movement, the University of the Republic and some non-Catholic churches, among others). During 2003 and 2004 the CNOOSSDSSR had become a qualified interlocutor who, from the civil society field, participated successfully in the parliamentary debate.

Once the bill for the Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Health was defeated in May 2004, the CNOOSSDSSR, together with the supportive legislators, publicly stated the commitment to "...promote the approval of a law guaranteeing the full exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, including the legal and safe protection of abortion, in the first year of the next legislature [February 15, 2005]"¹⁷.

Nevertheless, until June 2006 there was no legislative initiative by the political authorities historically committed to this subject, and the situation was not reverted from the civil society field. Apart from trying different strategies, the feminist organizations lacked the strength and political initiative to force the debate about abortion and sexual and reproductive health.

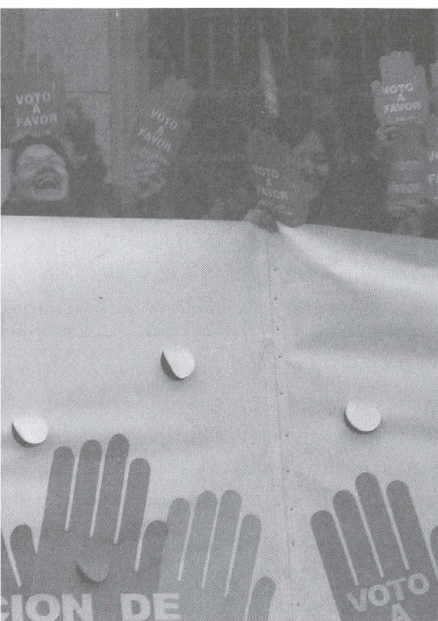
During the period 2004-2006 there was a "routinization" of the demands related to the abortion, and, significantly, feminisms had no capacity to mobilize their former alliances in favor of the bill for sexual and reproductive health. Most actions of that period



coincided with the dates internationally assigned to the promotion of women's rights (November 25, 2005¹⁸, March 8, May 28 and September 28, 2006, among others).

Some actions broke that routine and achieved a high mediatic impact, like the mobilization organized by the Feminist Collective Cotidiano Mujer one year after the bill for the defense of sexual and reproductive health was rejected in the Senate of the Republic. It consisted of distributing "parsley branches" among the legislators, in a clear reference to one of the methods used by women to abort outside the guarantees of the health system¹⁹.

On March 8, 2006 there was another action of great visibility when the President of the Republic chose the day before the International Women's Day to reassert its frontal opposition to decriminalization of abortion. On that day, the CNOOSSDSSR installed a "huge hand" in front of the domicile of the



President as a symbol of the demand of approval of the law on sexual and reproductive health²⁰. On the same day, the President, in arriving at the building of the Presidency for an act to support the activities of the National Institute of Women, was received by a public who was massively shaking the emblematic “hands”.

But the demand for abortion decriminalization as the gear to a specific call and mobilization had no weight in the actual political agenda, and turned into a public confrontation that had the feminist organizations and some male and female on one side, and the President of the Republic on the other.

The President turned out to be the voice of a “sufficient power” capable of preventing the progress of any attempt of legal reconsideration about abortion. When legislators Mónica Xavier and Margarita Percovich announced that they would present another bill for the defense of reproductive health, the

President of the Republic increased his political pressure about the issue. On the eve of March 8, 2006 “he let know” that, should the bill be approved and ratified by the General Assembly of the Legislative Power, he would dissolve the Houses: “Upon the intention of some legislators of the Frente Amplio Party to re-promote the bill on sexual and reproductive health (which includes the decriminalization of abortion), Vice President Rodolfo Nin Novoa said last week to the authorities [of Frente Amplio Party] that Vázquez is ready to follow ‘every constitutional path’ to prevent the initiative from being successful (...) The intention of the President is to veto the law. He even may dissolve the Houses in case the law is passed and if the General Assembly removes the veto (...) With these words the President wants to show his strength and conviction to oppose the bill [and even considered] unlikely that he may end up dissolving the Houses [the intention is] that the bill will not be presented or considered in view of the position of the President in that respect”²¹.

Regardless of further denials, the President’s threat proved to be an efficient slow down. On June 6, de 2006 a new bill containing the essential contents of the previous ones (including the relative decriminalization of abortion) was presented, but it was not discussed in the Parliament for more than one year²².

Even with a new bill presented to the Parliament, the political and social players who were in favor of the decriminalization of abortion did not manage to break the strong “progressist discipline”. Good

examples of that were the public conclusions of an interview between CNSmujeres²³ (National Monitoring Commission) and Tabaré Vázquez in March, 2007, where the President “proposed” to the women’s organizations to “resolve” the democratic conflict implicit in his prohibition to the debate about abortion “by waiting until [he] leaves the presidency” in the year 2010.²⁴

In answer to the above, the CNOOSSDSSR publicly ratified its demands with a statement demanding the parliamentary debate and approval of the law for the Defense of Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health. Such statement was signed by 116 social organizations and, although it was not read in the act to which it was addressed, it was made public through its publication in the media²⁵.

The relative rupture of the stagnation around the bill also boosted the proposals from the authorities of the political opposition. Their initiative was to “explore” alternatives to the debate that would confront the President of the Republic with the Legislative Power through a consultative plebiscite (non-binding and without legal effects) that got to be considered by some feminist leaderships²⁶.

Until June 5, 2007 the bill for the Defense of the Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health was not included in the agenda of issues to be dealt with by the Commission of Health of the Senate, notwithstanding the systematic claims of the proposing legislators. The majority of the Commission members were contrary to the decriminalization of abortion and the discussion was blocked.

However, this correlation of forces was compensated and surpassed by a citizen action that modified drastically the debate conditions.

Once the analyzed process was over, on September 11, 2007, the Commission on Health of the Senate approved by four votes in six the bill for the Defense of the Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health. One of the Senators of the Frente Amplio Party who integrates the majority contrary to the bill in the Commission of Health was not present in the session, thus entitling his alternate to vote in favor of the bill²⁷.

As at the date of this report it is reasonably possible that the majority required to approve the bill in the Senate be achieved and that it then be discussed in the House of Representatives in 2008.

It is a particularly fragile possibility, in the light of the already explained *pendular reaction* of political agencies during the debate processes about abortion decriminalization.



CITIZEN ACTION: The social individual who aborts takes the floor

As from June 1, there was a citizen solidarity mobilization arising from the repudiation to the conviction of a 20-year old woman for the "crime of abortion". She had been reported to the Police by a doctor after he treated her for complications derived from an abortion performed in a clandestine clinic. The initiative emerged from at least two different and non-coordinated spaces: some organizations that integrate the CNOOSSDSSR²⁸ and the Women's Commission of the "Vertiente Artiguista"²⁹.

The CNOOSSDSSR did not reach internal consensus to promote this mobilization. That was the "de facto" reason that originated the emergence of the new collective identity "We men and women too" (*Nosotras y nosotros también*). It was articulated around the need to act in solidarity, publicly assuming to share the experience and crime of abortion for which the "20-year old woman" was convicted".

Its first action was to open, at 12 a.m. of June 1, a public space on the Internet (a Blog³⁰) with the following content:

We men and women too

On May 16, 2007 a Uruguayan woman was convicted and charged with the "crime of abortion" by the Judge of the 19th term Luis Charles upon the denunciation made by a doctor, representing a serious violation of the rights of the accused and convicted woman.

I sign

On May 16, 2007 a Uruguayan woman was convicted for the "crime of abortion".

The undersigned men and women have infringed Law No. 9.763 of 1938, by aborting, financing an abortion, supporting a woman who had an abortion, knowing the identity of many of them and remaining silent.

We, men and women, are also the convicted 20-year old woman. Either we are all criminals or that law is unfair.

Send your support to participa@ciudadania.org.uy including your name and surname, Uruguayan Identity Card and profession.

The Blog was launched with 100 signatures, collected by the organizers among people publicly committed to the decriminalization of abortion. The final number of signatures edited amounts to 8,651, which, in more than 95% of the cases, correspond to spontaneous support.

The dissemination, content and objectives of the Blog were produced mainly through:

- the mass media that promptly “disseminated” the existence of a public space where thousands of people self-incriminate themselves by stating that they had committed crimes of abortion,
- hundreds of people who in a few days created a “snowball” by spreading the initiative by e-mail and in person;
- the international feminist networks that disseminated the news immediately;
- certain media allied to the movement who spread the news on the evolution of the number of supporters registered in the Blog, the presence of important people and the relevant political effects;
- once the campaign had already achieved a high political impact, there were wall mural advertising actions that brought about new visibility.

After the Blog was released to the public it became a political event, independent from its promoters and with its own dynamics.

Some aspects of this experience are detailed below.

Radical politization of the personal experience

For the first time in the history of debates on abortion, a *collective player* undertakes *expressly and in the first person* to have had an abortion.

The public self-incrimination for having committed crimes of abortion re-dimensions the action of support to the convicted woman, giving way to human compassion and advocacy³¹.

It highlights and radically politicizes the vital experience of people by challenging the criminal law that represents the entire coercive power of the State. It breaks the abstract nature of debates on abortion, usually divided into sanitary, juridical, moral and ethic levels thus allowing to make it public, embodied in the social praxis and the vital tradition of people.

Accordingly, the historic contribution of feminism conceptualized in the definition “the personal is political”, is updated in the specific political praxis.



Universal dimension of violence against women

The text included in the Blog for the people willing to register their support contains a wide range of human experiences related to the situation of abortion. It was addressed not only to women who aborted but to men and women who may have shared from different situations the experience of couples, relatives, friends, etc.

The list of those spaces of personal experience that lead to be a part of “We men and women too” (“... *we had infringed Law No. 9.763 of 1938 as we have had an abortion, we have financed an abortion, we have supported a woman who had an abortion, knowing the identity of many of them and remaining silent*”) sum up the grounds for the charge with the crime of abortion in accordance with the different paragraphs of Article 1 of the Criminal Code³².

Some of the hundreds of the supporters’ letters and messages are published in the Blog. These testimonies visibilize that the State violence implicit in the punitive legislation of voluntary abortion is not limited to women who abort, even when they are the main object of this violence and their bodies are the scenario where that violence is concentrated and committed.

This political experience evidences the universality of some demands included in the public agenda from the radical demand presented by a social subject historically excluded from political decision-making: women.

Democratic radicalism and citizen advocacy in political decisions

The movement “We men and women too” put an end to the paralyzing effects that the threats of the President of the Republic had on the Legislative Power; this became evident when, on June 29, 6,000 signatures were given to the Chairman of the General Assembly and Vice President of the Republic.

His pronouncement in favor of the decriminalization of abortion and his commitment to the promotion of the law for the Defense of the Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health were widely covered by the media. In fact, the week after, the Commission of Health of the Senate started the discussion and partial approval of the bill articles.

Hence, an action originated in a solidarity movement to a woman who aborts, is politicized through a historically feminist claim, but ends up as a positive contribution (from a citizenist perspective) to a situation that affected the quality of Uruguayan democracy.

Discrimination and subordination as the center of the debate

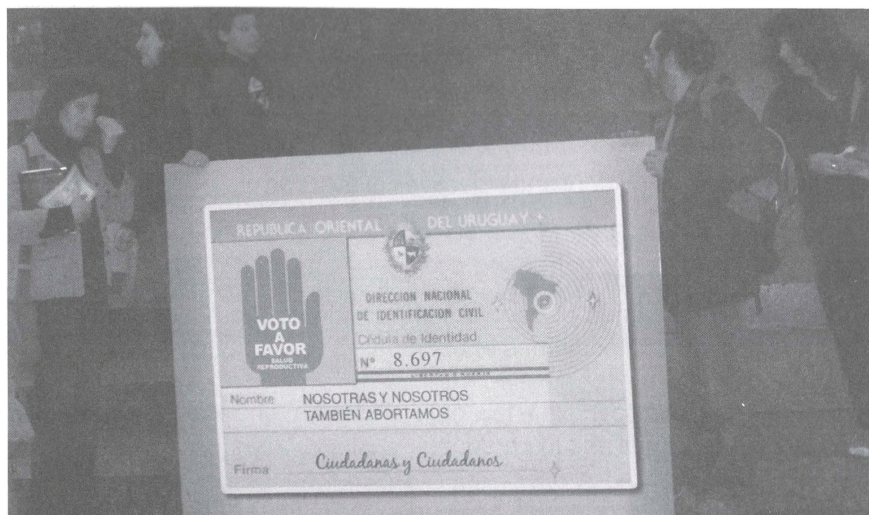
The collective action in resistance to the criminal justice intervention against a woman who had an abortion dramatically restores the crucial core of the debate where the female subordination is expressed and updated. Likewise, a political action based on a specific human experience allows to overcome the discursive strategies that evade the right to abortion as the core of women’s rights. The Blog gave preeminence to the discrimination against women, traditionally invisibilized within the debates about ‘abortion’ which are usually focused on biomedical, philosophic, juridical and moral dimensions, among others.

Renewal of the “economy” of political resources

From 2005 to 2007, the discussion within the CNOOSSDSSR on how to break the presidential block to the debate about abortion was resolved around the often self-referred *institutional rationalities* (including the status of political alliances, the availability of economic resources and the capacity -of whom?- to obtain and manage them, the internal resolution agreements, disagreements and procedures).

Under the argument of “not de-accumulating the achievements attained from 2003 to 2004” some confrontative strategies were avoided so that, without political offensive and under the “progressist disciplinment” we did not manage “to go to the encounter of” a “public opinion” definitely coincident with the feminist stances regarding abortion³³.

The Blog and the emergence of the “We men and women too” identity revealed the possibility of deploying a new “political economy” of feminist resources.



Assuming that this is an arbitrary division, and in order to simplify the presentation, we will point out some political events and forms of action chosen by the promoters to develop the experience analyzed.

Political impacts

A mobilization originated in a solidarity reaction in the face of a situation *perceived* as unfair, promptly brought about “unexpected” results, challenging society and impacting the political system and the key public agents.

The hegemony of the anti-abortion discourse of the President of the Republic at the highest government levels is broken; eight of the leading members of the Executive Power joined ea the Blog³⁴; and the same happens with scores of members of the Legislative Power and the middle management. As appointed above, the pronouncement of the Vice President of the Republic brought this process to a conclusion and marked an inflection in the “progressist disciplinment” of the Legislative Power.

It re-establishes the political legitimacy for the “citizen movement”, turning it into an interlocutor of the State and medical agencies that are the historically hegemonic voices with regard to abortion. Civil society takes the initiative and shows advocacy capacity in real time.

It puts the issue of decriminalization of abortion back in the core of the debate in the mass media; focuses the attention and the action on the struggle to derogate the “State criminal answer” to the issue of abortion. It evidences the possibility of disarticulating, even provisionally, the *habitus discursivo* based on the dichotomy “pro-abortion or pro-life”.

It centers the attention on an abortion-related event that breaks the traditional “communicational routines”: bills, opinions of the Catholic Church, presidential veto, “maternal deaths”, “woman’s right or unborn child’s right...” The axis shifts to the discriminatory effects against women of the law that criminalizes abortion.

It compels the most representative agencies of the medicine sector to make a public statement regarding the “non-ethic and anti-juridical” nature of the conduct of the doctor who denounced the eventually convicted women³⁵. In this way, the discourse of those institutions grants more legitimacy to the aborting woman over the criminalizing law.

It facilitates the re-entry into the struggle for abortion decriminalization to institutions previously allied with the women’s movement who had retreated – in the framework of the “progressist disciplinment” – (for example: the Central Management Council of the University of the Republic and the leading management of the trade union movement)³⁶.

It facilitates other actions from state agencies who are in favor of the women’s rights, such as the letter by the Minister of the Interior to the Head of the Police Department of the city of Rivera condemning the actions carried out to investigate the possibility of an abortion among the users of the Public Health System³⁷.

It constitutes a “shield” integrated by thousands of people (identified with name and surname) that morally undermines the authority for punitive intervention of the State against the aborting women. This evidences and consolidates through a collective action the “tacit consensus” of the society that has in fact decriminalized the practice of abortion.

New forms of articulation and citizen expression

The mobilization analyzed reverted and compensated the decreasing capacity of the movements for the decriminalization of abortion to gather the previously accomplished political and social consensus around their demands. Let us then review some signs of identity of this “political event”.

“We men and women too” is a temporary expression of the civil society, a “diffuse and confused”, collective subject who is organized “ad hoc” in order to express itself around a specific situation of deep social conflict. The feminism promoting it evidence a renewed capacity for convening (itself) and articulating (itself) with a diversity of social players who join the action under a historically feminist banner, but from their own sensitivities and with their own perspectives. So, the mobilization always stays true to -and never perverts- its originality, without avoiding the implicit political significance. The action is transparent, respectful of pluralities and drastically autonomous from any pre-existing “agenda”.

There are no opinions, hierarchies or prevalence of “historical” leaderships within the new (transitory) movement. The most renowned organizations stand on an equal footing to those recently arrived to influence and decide, as well as those people who personally participate of the movement.

During the course of “the movement”, debate and decision-making were horizontal, guaranteeing a constant information flow toward all those involved, and where organizers operated as facilitators rather than as leaders.

The instances for collective debate were open spaces, without individualities, where the discussion was always articulated around the political impact caused by the Blog week by week. The collective debate, via e-mail or in meetings, registered and positioned around the evolution of the intended political event and the best alternatives for its deepening.

The movement allowed new players to the field of the struggle for the decriminalization of abortion³⁸.

There are no old or new traditional leaderships reproduced. The voices come from the diversity of people and the plurality of approaches that express the support to the Blog. This characteristic was a clear contribution to the promotion of a debate that “trespasses” the historic polarization between “pro-rights” and “pro-life”³⁹.

The practical action is supported on the active volunteers where the relevance of recognizing plurality as an unwaivable value is evidenced, both at the discursive and the organizational level.

Mobilization was characterized by the extraordinary economy of material resources in proportion to the results achieved. The dissemination of the existence of the Blog was promoted by the different persons and organizations involved; likewise, there were organizations that contributed significantly with economic resources for the publications in the media which allowed to give visibility to the mobilization⁴⁰.

Supports to the Blog - the actual social basis of the movement – (re)produced as an autonomous and self-generated movement. A small group of activists managed the technical process of reception and publication of signatures (two persons with a high technical qualification, three persons as permanent supporters and another three as circumstantial supporters). The work of this team guaranteed that the support expressions be published in real time, prevented the repetition of names, authenticated those signatures which, due to their public notoriety needed to have their authenticity confirmed, prevented potential traps, selected comments attached to the signatures for their publication in the Blog, answered scores of questions and controversies that came together with many e-mails containing signatures⁴¹.

Considering only the e-mails received at the “address” participa@ciudadania.org.uy⁴² (4910), the frequency was as follows: ~

- 51% of the signatures were received in the first 10 days
- 70% of the signatures were entered in the first 15 days
- 91,4% of the current total was received in the first 30 days
- From June 1 to 15 an average of over 100 signatures were received daily, but from June 6 to June 8, the daily average of reception was over 300 signatures⁴³

These data reveal the potentiality of the electronic media to contribute to the production, communication and reproduction of political events.

A significant number of support expressions were received so rapidly that this fact was decisive to make the self-incrimination a relevant political event. This was verified by the fact that after the written media released the “first thousands” of support expressions, the number and quality of signatures coming from government, political, academic, communication and arts spheres, among others, raised considerably.

Those supports reinforced the political significance of the mobilization thus facilitating to break the wall of silence that seemed to have fallen over the Blog one week later. The lack of reaction from the State powers, particularly the Judicial Power, in view of the grotesque mass public confession of a crime, looked like signs directed to let silence kill the symbolic impact of the action⁴⁴.

For that reason, two weeks after the launching and considering that the Campaign was reaching its peak, it was decided to use the scarce economic resources available in two paid publications that would include all names of supporters up to the moment of release (weekly newspaper Brecha, 4,101 signatures on July 15, 2007, and daily newspaper La Diaria 5,000 signatures on July 22, 2007). Care was taken in the last release to include the names of government personalities who expressed their support.

The campaign hit its top and its main political objective when, on June 29, a list of 6,000 signatures of “self-incriminated people” was delivered to the Chairman of the General Assembly of the Legislative Power who is the Vice President of the Republic, who stated he was in favor of abortion decriminalization and committed himself to foster the parliamentary discussion of the bill for the defense of the productive health.

At that point, the “progressist discipline” was broken, and the Commission of Health of the Senate initiated the consideration and partial approval of the Law for the Defense of the Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health. Four weeks (and six thousand signatures) have elapsed since the commencement of the Blog.

An open question

Feminist movements constituted the central core of citizen mobilization, the characteristics of which were analyzed. Uruguayan feminisms currently maintain their differences when defining strategies and actions to intensify the struggle for the right to abortion. In addition, as we said before, other social players participating in the field of sexual and reproductive health are allies but also influence the contents of the claim for women’s rights.

For over a decade the public debate on abortion has been strongly marked by the biomedical perspective: whether in privileging the “maternal deaths” variable or promoting or limiting the use of Misoprostol, defending or blocking the Order 369, proposing to regulate abortions “by medical/legal prescription”, or including the relative decriminalization of abortion in a project for the defense of the “right to health”.

Paradigmatically, the denial of the President of the Republic to the decriminalization of abortion is based on his conviction-condition as a physician.

The experience of the movement "We men and women too" has come to an end, but it left the evidence that it is possible to progress in the field of women's rights from a different rationality.

The movement could have been restricted to its solidary content, and it would have also found its ethic and political grounds in that fact. Yet, it went far beyond its original motive and showed the capacity of Uruguayan feminism to promote political initiatives and modify a frame of power consolidated around a real act of power, taking the right of women to abortion as its main axis.

From the radical claim of the right of the aborting women not to be pursued, a significant portion of the tensions implicit in the demands of new citizenships were visibilized and put into motion.

A vital question is how much of the experience accumulated in this event will be incorporated as common cultural capital by the Uruguayan feminism to participate in the future struggles for the decriminalization of abortion, the democratic radicalization and the promotion of inclusive citizenships ♦

1 www.despenalizar.blogspot.com

2 Bourdieu, Pierre, *Male Domination* (1998) 2000: page 11

3 I use the term sexuality in conscious reference to the intercourse and heterosexual dimension.

4 Giulia Tamayo glossing Norberto Bobbio, refers especially to the process of "specification" of the International Law of Human Rights derived from the recognition of the disadvantages and possible damages characteristic of some social groups -women, in this case- that must be compensated by interventions based on rights. *Bajo la Piel, Derechos Sexuales y Derechos Reproductivos*. Giulia Tamayo, Flora Tristán, Lima, 2001.

5 For the year of reference (2000) they are 33,000 voluntary abortions over 52,000 births. In Rafael Sanseviero, *Condena, Tolerancia y Negación, El Aborto en Uruguay*, CIIIP, Montevideo, 2003.

6 Marta Rosenberg *Las mujeres como sujetos...Las elecciones reproductivas, las condiciones de las mismas y los derechos que garantizan las libertades para tomarlas*. In Forum for the reproductive rights "Our bodies, our lives" (...) Talleres Gráficos Legraf

7 The only exception to this characteristic was Cotidiano Mujer *Yo aborto, tu abortas, todas callamos*. Ed. Cotidiano Mujer Montevideo, 1989.

8 Please note that the formulation "maternal mortality for unsafe abortion" intrinsically denies the identity of the person in question, as it is precisely a woman who dies as the result of the social conditions that compel her to act to avoid becoming a mother.

9 The "decriminalization" included in all bills is always restricted by the circumstances, terms and "conditions" within which the abortion is performed, outside which it remains a crime. Therefore, it is proper to refer to "relative" decriminalization in these cases.

10 Miguel Langón, *Interrupción Voluntaria de la Gravidéz. Un estudio de derecho comparado*, AM Editores, Montevideo, 1979.

Buenos Aires 1998

11 Graciela Saprizza *Entre o desejo e a norma: a despenalização do aborto no Uruguai, 1934-*

1938 In Albertina de Oliveira Costa (Org) *Direitos tardios, saúde, sexualidade e reprodução na América Latina* Fundação Carlos Chagas- Editora 34- Brasil 1997

12 Entity usurping the legislative function during dictatorship.

13 This radicality is not even presented in the draft bill prepared and submitted to the House of Representatives by the author of this work and feminist lawyer Graciela Dufau. It was "agreed by consensus" (prior to its legislative introduction) with the feminist organizations who, at that time, described it as the "most complete, as it takes into account [the] multiplicity of situations [referring to abortion]" See: Intervention of MYSU (Women and Health in Uruguay) on July 16, 2002 in the Health Commission of the House of Representatives (until 2005 MYSU was a network of feminist organizations, founded and integrated by Cotidiano Mujer, Catholics for the Right to Decide, CLADEM and Women's House La Unión; from then on became a NGO specialized in gender and sexual and reproductive health).

14 Miguel Langón Cuñarro, *El proyecto uruguayo sobre voluntaria interrupción de la gravidez*, 1979. In *La Justicia Uruguaya Magazine*, Montevideo, 1979. T 91 pp. 19-33. My italics. RS.

15 The "presidential veto" is a constitutional institute that entitles the President of the Republic not to enact a Law, as a whole or in part, at its sole discretion. The presidential veto represents a conflict situation between the Executive Power and the Legislative Power that in extreme cases can lead to the dissolution of the Houses. But even before that, it forces the Party members in the government to present and resolve their differences publicly. This "economy of the political image" was explored by President Batlle, especially because it was an "election year". The Bill for the Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Health was rejected by 17 negative votes and 13 affirmative votes. At least three legislators of the Colorado Party, historically consentient to the decriminalization of abortion, expressed publicly that they voted against the bill for political discipline before their President.

16 It is remarkable that the Encuentro Progresista-Frente Amplio was the main promoter of the Bill while it was opposition and as a result of the elections of 2004, it has absolute majority in the Legislative Power.

17 This happened on May 28, 2004 according to Lilián Abracinskas and Alejandra López in *Maternal Mortality, abortion and health in Uruguay. A changing scenario* Mysu, Montevideo 2004.

18 Adding the demand for the voting of the law in defense of sexual and reproductive health to the claims included in the actions of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

19 See: <http://www.cotidianomujer.org.uy/2005/2005.htm>

20 From the parliamentary debate that concluded in May, 2004, the symbol for those who were favorable to the bill for the defense of the right to sexual and reproductive health was an orange-colored hand with the inscription: "VOTE IN FAVOR reproductive health".

25 Weekly newspapers: "Voces del Frente" and "Brecha".

26 "From the opposition (...) the idea of consulting the citizenship on whether to legislate abortion and its decriminalization started to prosper. It was an initiative introduced two years ago by Representative Washington Abdala that promotes a "consultative referendum" that may be carried out concurrently with the national elections. Senator Isaac Alfie of the Colorado Party and Senator Enrique Antia of National Party were favorable to a popular consultation as proposed by Abdala (...) The women's organizations who stand for the decriminalization of abortion are studying the possibility of collecting 600,000 signatures to present their own bill in the Parliament. If they succeed, the procedure establishes that, should the Legislative Power fail to decide about the bill within a period of three months, a plebiscite will be automatically called. Lilián Abracinskas, coordinator of CNS Mujeres, explained to the Television Network Canal 10 the reasons for this initiative. "The bill has been in the Commission of Health of the Senate for three years and we believe that the pronouncement of the presidential veto is effectively an obstacle to the real democratic debate. (...) Should it be necessary to resort to a direct democracy, we will do it" in: http://www.montevideo.com.uy/nnoticias_46698_1.html

27 Senator Alberto Cid, who in 2004 voted in favor to the decriminalization of abortion and in this legislative period he refuses to do so in order not to "confront" the President of the Republic. See: <http://espectador.com/nota.php?idNota=50109>

28 Cotidiano MUJER, RUDA, Instituto Mujer y Sociedad, Mujer Ahora, CLADEM, Ovejas Negras, among others.

29 One of the large political blocks that integrates the Frente Amplio Party.

30 <http://despenalizar.blogspot.com/>

31 It is worth mentioning that some weeks after the release of the Blog "We men and women too" a "counter-Blog" was installed, where the typical discourse and images "anti-abortion" were reproduced. Its editors have included over 10,000 names of supporters. However, this Blog had no public impact at all. An explanation of this fact would be that those signatures

support a "stance" with respect to abortion. This difference in quality between one Blog and the other also makes the difference of political impact.

See: <http://www.geocities.com/unaluzporlavida/docs/firmas.html>

32 The content of hundreds of messages of men and women with different status which accompanied the e-mails of support confirm the above. (Many of them are published in www.despenalizar.blogspot.com.uy).

33 Since 2003, the opinion measures managed by women's organizations situate around 63% the opinions in favor of the law on sexual and reproductive health. On May 25, 2007, Sociologist Eduardo Bottinelli, general coordinator of Factum - with no relation with feminism whatsoever - affirmed that, in Uruguay, there has been a "consolidated public opinion" for 20 years, around 6 in 4 favorable to the decriminalization of abortion. http://www.espectador.com/_dyn/mediaNode/go.php?SID=&id=96226 My italics. RS.



34 Ministers of Social Development and of the Interior, Minister of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic. Likewise, four Vice Ministers also express their support. It is worth mentioning the symbolic relevance of some support expressions: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, together with the President of the Republic, are vested with the representation of the State before the international community, and the Minister of the Interior is in charge of exercising the repressive and jurisdictional power of the State for the compliance with the Criminal Code. They both recognized publicly that they infringed the current legislation.

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35 See in the Blog the letter dated June 21, 2007 of the School of Medicine, the Arbitral Court of the Medical Union of Uruguay (*Sindicato Médico del Uruguay*) and the Medical Federation of the Provinces (*Federación Médica del Interior*).

36 The former issued a formal statement dated July 17, 2007 which text is consistent with the Blog and the latter massively signed the Blog. www.despenalizar.blogspot.com

37 Simultaneously with the conviction of the aborting woman there started a survey among the pregnant women as a result of finding a human fetus in a municipal garbage container. The survey was implemented by the Police Force with information provided by officers of the Public Health System. The Minister of the Interior publicly undermined the authority of the police action. See: www.espectador.com/_dyn/mediaNode/go.php?id=99187

38 Organizations of young people around the legalization for the consumption of marihuana and the Uruguayan division of Amnesty International, that, due to an international mandate, has its possibilities of public intervention restricted.

39 The extent of arguments is shown in the "letters" published in the Blog together with the signatures. Paradigmatically the letter from the convicted woman's mother, that states to be against abortion and yet claims against the denunciation and conviction of her daughter.

40 Cotidiano Mujer exclusively bore the costs of the publications in the press media.

41 The managers of the Blog left no message unanswered, whether they were in favor or against the initiative. This exercise represented a "dialogue" that also allowed to know the evolution of at least the most sensitive sector to this issue with access to Internet, and, consequently, to make the relevant political decisions.





44 The “grotesque” includes the signature of the Minister of the Interior who has the main political, legal and constitutional responsibility of guaranteeing the effectiveness of the rule of law and, consequently, of suppressing “the crime”; the crime of abortion as well.

42 The managers of the Blog received signatures in and from personal e-mail boxes and from institutions all the time. In fact, only 50% was received via participa@ciudadania.org.uy.

43 The significance of these magnitudes must be analyzed in the context of a country with 3 million inhabitants and especially taking into account the fact that this is the public recognition of a crime whereby a woman has been convicted.



Women's popular organizations in Lima and the Agenda for sexual and reproductive rights

Paul Flores Arroyo
Perú

Agenda for sexual and reproductive health in the women's popular movement: a track record within a political context that is worth analyzing

The women's popular movement has drafted in the context of social struggle many stories connected to articulation, to mobilization in favor of their demands for a better quality of life. One of these agendas of demands is the right to health, specifically sexual and reproductive health.

The mobilization path of women's popular movement for sexual and reproductive health was born in the late eighties, when the feminist movement started to focus on the demands connected to State policies that had impacted women's lives, specially those of the poorest women. So, in the nineties, there is a full relationship established between feminist institutions and women's popular organizations to further the inclusion and strengthening of social programs.

This inclusion of policies in favor of women's demands takes place during the years of government of Alberto Fujimori; a context that may be defined as contradictory for feminist organizations, as this government promoted policies in favor of the feminist agenda, basically referred to violence against women and family planning, while these organizations participated in actions to denounce anti-democratic practices of this government.

The return of democracy posed new challenges for the articulation between the feminist movement and the women's popular movement. After a decade of corruption, violation of human rights and application of neoliberal economic policies, the weakening of the social fabric was evident and led to the depolitization of many women's organizations.

From 2001 to 2003, agendas related to reproductive and sexual health entered into a critical phase due to the strong re-emergence of fundamentalist groups, who, from the public sectors (Women's Ministry, Ministry of Health, the health committee of the Congress, etc), prevented the consolidation of policies promoting access to reproductive and sexual health from a human rights approach.

The actions taken by the former ministers Luis Solari and Fernando Carbone contributed to implement a fundamentalist architecture which represented the incorporation of notions such as: "unborn", "complementarity between men and women", "family approach" as clear arguments against the notions of sexual and reproductive rights. Besides, they led to the adoption of measures to hinder the advance of policies seeking to guarantee the commitments subscribed by Peru in key conferences such as the International Conference on Population and Development- ICPD (Cairo) and the Women's International Conference.

In this context there starts the process of articulation of several women's popular organizations to further the agenda of sexual and reproductive rights, taking into account that the history of forced sterilizations created a veil of fear upon the promotion of contraceptive methods, and that women from popular movements were not yet putting an emphasis on the agenda of violence against women, save for some groups of promoters who were connected to NGOs' development projects dealing with this subject.

Articulation of women organized around sexuality: the Monitoring Group

The history of the Monitoring Group on Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women Grassroots Organizations is one in line with the demands for a sexed body, for women's reproductive body. A history that started in the times following Fujimory's dictatorship, when the Health Monitoring Group – integrated by NGOs including CMP Fora Tristán – called in 2004 some one hundred leaders of women's popular organizations from Metropolitan Lima and El Callao to the Workshop "Citizen monitoring on health policies: women's right and responsibility", aimed at awakening a process of reflection and analysis on policies of sexual and reproductive health and its implementation in the district. Furthermore, this workshop was proposed as a space where to pose demands and proposals reflecting women's needs and interests regarding sexual and reproductive health.

During this event, several concerns connected to contraceptive methods, HIV/aids prevention and public services were identified. Also, there were drafted proposals and demands to the central government, the Ministry of Health, the Congress of the Republic, the NGOs and the social organizations themselves.

Some of the problems identified in relation with contraceptive methods, were:

- Lack of supply of methods already available in the country, such as the copper T, injectables, condoms and pills.

- Some contraceptive methods such as vaginal pessaries and female condoms are not yet available.
- Scarce dissemination and promotion of contraceptive methods among the population.
- No institutional supplies or informs about Emergency Oral Contraception.

The following are the identified issues related to HIV/aids:

- Lack of public campaigns on education and prevention from the State. Those existing only take place within health facilities.
- There is no preventive equation, and no information is delivered to users.
- Lack of treatment for people coexisting with HIV.
- The State does not call or coordinate with NGOs or with promoters.

The problems identified in public services are:

- Low quality care especially in services addressed to women. Mistreatment by technical, medical and administrative staff towards female users.
- Mistreatment to people who use the Integral Health Insurance (SIS, by its acronym in Spanish). Poor quality care, the medicine prescribed is not delivered.
- Lack of services for teenagers: related to psychology for treating violence and for complicated delivery care.
- Shortage of service personnel.
- Increase in the number of people demanding care.
- Too restricted and insufficient health care schedules, mainly affecting women; limited quota for gynecological care.
- Lack of advice centers and orientation in the use of contraceptive methods.
- Discrimination of HIV/aids and TBC patients.

The identification of these issues ratify the throwback measures taken by actions contrary to the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights; remember that in 2003 the Ministry of Health was still entrusted to Fernando Carbone. Pedro Francke (CIES researcher) denounced that the MINSA, in the first year of the former minister's administration, ceased to execute 117 million soles, as reported by the CIES. The service area was the most affected.

Besides the issues mentioned above, organized women put forward their demands and proposals:

To the Central Government

- To assign a higher budget to sexual and reproductive health.
- To comply with the policies related to health and respect for human rights.
- To improve service infrastructure.
- To set up a free telephone line of the Office of Public Defense to answer the claims and demands from male and female users.

To the Ministry of Health

- To comply with the laws and policies that guarantee respect to sexual and reproductive health rights, without ideological bias. To prevent the prevalence of religious beliefs in the execution of public health policies.
- To punish physicians who fail to comply with the regulations in force, disrespecting the right of the people.
- To recognize the work carried out by health promoters.
- To establish a complaints office in each of the services, and gather recommendations by means of suggestion boxes.
- To respect human rights of female users and prevent discrimination of people.
- To improve the health budget distribution to strengthen programs on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), family planning and teenagers.
- To remove from office the current Minister of Health.
- To work in coordination with the community, gathering a higher number of organizations.
- To guarantee a wide range of contraceptive measures available in doctor's offices, as well as of medicines in general.
- To implement clear policies in regards to HIV/aids, including sensitizing health professionals to the rights of infected people.
- To increase the number of professionals in the health services and to enhance the quality and warmth by means of training, especially to improve the quality in the SIS attention.

To the Congress of the Republic

- To enforce the actual compliance of the laws in our country, particularly those that guarantee the exercise of people's sexual and reproductive rights.
- To promptly implement the Plan for Equal Opportunities among men and women.
- To guarantee access to medications to the whole population
- To decriminalize abortion in cases of rape.

To NGOs

- To undertake an actual commitment, more consistent in time.
- To train community organizations in legal and medical monitoring actions.
- To facilitate dissemination materials for health community campaigns.
- To support the establishment of monitoring committees in each area.
- To keep giving opinion on the current situation of the health sector.

To social organizations

- To replicate this workshop in each district.
- To guarantee full participation of the community in organizations.
- To strengthen male and female citizens in actions related to the claim of their rights.
- To engage and have a bearing on young men and women regarding issues such as health and citizen monitoring.
- To train representatives of each organization on the rights of users.
- To establish monitoring committees and strengthen those already existing.
- To perform training courses geared to teenagers, teachers and parents.
- To carry out a demonstration on May 28 – the Day of Action for Women's Health, to sensitize about women's health issues.

One of the proposals addressed to social organizations was to establish monitoring committees and to strengthen those already existing. These commitments served as

foundations for the current Monitoring Group, a space of articulation arising from the need to demand that the advances in sexual and reproductive health policies be maintained, but also that the women's right to decide be guaranteed as a basis for these policies.

The Monitoring Group integrated by women leaders representatives of women's popular organizations networks, elected in such workshop taking into account the attendance of organizations from various areas of Lima (in those days, Lima was divided into cones: North, East, West and South), had the challenge to develop mobilization and monitoring actions for the defense of sexual and reproductive rights.

With the support of the NGOs members of the Health Group (currently, the NGOs' Monitoring Group for Sexual and Reproductive Rights), there started a set of activities in the same year. One of the first actions was the delivery of a memorial with signatures in support of the minister of the MIMDES (Ministry of Women and Social Development), before the Congress. Then there was a powerful demonstration supporting the administration of the Minister of Health (Pilar Mazetti) who favored the implementation of the EOC (Emergency Oral Contraception) as part of the contraceptive methods and the improvement of the supply of the remaining family planning methods.

These support actions consisted in disseminating an announcement in support of the MINS for implementing the EOC, and a sit-down strike at the doors of the Congress of the Republic to demand the cease of harassments and demands addressed to the Minister upon her decisions to incorporate the EOC to the planning methods to be provided by the State.

Organizations supporting this articulation: members of the Monitoring Group

Women who attended this metropolitan workshop –one of the first forums for organized women to discuss sexual and reproductive rights- were leader women, many of them with a vast experience in mobilizations carried out in favor of democracy.

Henry Moore



There were also women experienced in the promotion of health and in political participation.

There were these women who, echoing the proposals they launched to their own organizations, decided that the members of this Group should be the networks representing each area of Lima. Therefore, the first organizations participating in this Group were:

- Federación de Mujeres Organizadas en Centrales de Comedores Populares Autogestionarios from Metropolitan Lima Metropolitana – FEMOCCPALM
- Asociación Distrital de Promotoras y Promotores de Salud from San Juan de Lurigancho – ADPROSA.

- Red de Vigilancia Ciudadana en Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos from Comas, Carabaillo and Independencia.
- Central Nacional de Mujeres Sectores Populares del Perú “Micaela Bastidas” – Cede Lima.
- Asociación Red de Organizaciones de Promotoras de Salud from Northern Lima– AROPROSALUD.
- Central Zonal de Comedores of Cerros San Pedro and José Carlos Mariátegui, El Agustino.
- Comité Integral de salud – COINSA.
- Promotoras de Salud Casa del BienEstar from San Juan de Miraflores.
- Movimiento de Mujeres Ciudadanas from Northern Lima
- Asociación Vaso de Leche from Cruz de Mayo.



Other organizations joined later:

- Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Organizadas por la Vida y el desarrollo Integral – CONAMOVIDI
- Federación de Mujeres Organizadas de Comedores Autogestionarios por el Desarrollo Integral – FEMOCADI

These organizations, some of them established in the middle eighties and especially in the early nineties, have earned the acknowledgement of their community as well as of their local authorities.

Women representing these organizations have over ten years experience, not only in participating in their own organizations but also in networks and in the work committee set up by NGOs and local governments.

Such women's experience, while representing a stance of the agenda of sexual and reproductive rights, evidences that women are capable of promoting new leaderships. This challenge is necessary for the preservation of the articulation spaces and the democratic consolidation of their organizations.

Actions for sexual and reproductive rights: the work of the Monitoring Group

After the Monitoring Group was established, the work developed since 2004 was based on the following commitments undertaken by the organizations at the first Workshop:

- To reproduce this workshop in each district.
- To ensure full participation of the community in the organizations.
- To support male and female citizens in actions taken for claiming their rights.
- To engage and have a bearing on young men and women regarding issues such as health and citizen monitoring.
- To train representatives of each organization on the rights of users.
- To establish monitoring committees and strengthen those already existing.
- To perform training courses geared to teenagers, teachers and parents.
- To carry out a demonstration on May 28 – the Day of Action for Women's Health, to sensitize about women's health issues

On the basis of these commitments, the Monitoring Group carried out ten metropolitan workshops, attended by over one thousand women leaders of networks and organizations of the women's popular movement. Additionally, decentralized workshops started to be held in 2007 (previous workshops were organized in coordination with the allied NGOs and were held at a place in the center of the city, attended by representatives of every area of Lima). The two decentralized workshops held in Northern Lima and Eastern Lima, gathered over 160 women of the areas, in order to give space to new women leaders.

These workshops were expected to foster training spaces for women, besides promoting reflection and data collection on the situation of sexual and reproductive health. Similarly, these spaces allowed feminist organizations to exchange

information on advances and retreats at the level of public policies of women's sexual and reproductive rights.

These workshops also turned into spaces for political coordination among feminist and women's organizations to carry out actions for political visibility. Some of the most remarkable ones were: a demonstration and delivery of a memorial in support of the Minister Pilar Mazetti, a mobilization in favor of the decriminalization of abortion, the participation in the mobilization for the International Women's Day.

Other actions surviving through time is the release of the newsletter "Sumando Voces" (Adding voices). This document, currently in its 10th edition, has provided information to women's organizations on the work carried out by the Monitoring Group, and has also become a link between the women of the Monitoring Group and the grassroots who receive this material.

The process of the newsletter is quite interesting, as initially the material published had a noticeable presence of women from the feminist movement (who were interviewed on various subjects); however, women proposed to have a higher presence of women from the Group and other spaces, as they thought it was advisable that women receiving this document could get to know and learn from the voice of the same women leaders.

Other activities carried out in a continuous manner are the actions for internal strengthening, which translate into workshops, seminars and work meetings expected to provide women with the tools necessary to enhancing their monitoring and advocacy work.

Below you will find a summary of the main actions taken by the Group since 2004. This summary was drafted by the Group



members as part of the elaboration of the collective memory that started in 2007 to recover the process for the construction of this articulating space.

2004

- Starts the release of "Sumando Voces" newsletter by the Group.

2005

- We continued with the monitoring and with the newsletters "Sumando Voces".
- We chose two representatives to the Monitoring Group for MINSA and NGOs' SRR (Sexual and Reproductive Rights).
- We participated in spaces invited by the Monitoring Group for the NGOs' SRR.
- We participated in actions on the Millennium Development Goals of the Group and the Grassroots of the Organizations.
- We received the recognition of the Minister to the representatives of the Monitoring Group of the SRR, on the Day for the Safe and Healthy Motherhood.

2006

- On February 22 there is an evaluation on the work performed by the Group towards the Grassroots Organizations.
- In February, we participated in the workshop on advocacy and access to public information.
- In April, we received the results of the work on advocacy and access to public information.
- In April, we participated in the National Dialogue Committee between the Social Grassroots Organizations (OSBs) and DISA workers.
- We participated in the Metropolitan Workshop about the electoral context and the Women's agenda.
- Computing training to the Group.

2007

- In February a reflective workshop was held to identify coincidences with the feminist movement, strengthen the democratic process of the Group and draft the work plan.
- The Group takes part in March 8 celebrations.
- Members participate in a metropolitan workshop organized by the NGOs' Group to strengthen the process of monitoring the supply of contraceptive methods
- They monitor the supply of the healthcare centers.
- The Group organizes a decentralized workshop in Eastern Lima to evaluate the first year of the administration of the Peruvian Aprista Party.

The foregoing activities were evaluated by members of the Group. To these effects, it was decided to group activities in three main actions: Preparation of newsletters, women's workshops and political mobilization.

The members of the Monitoring Group believe that usually the limitation in the edition of newsletters is a huge problem when it comes to meeting the large demand. Women of the Group are also concerned about those cases in which the delivery does not guarantee an equitable distribution.

As regards to the women's workshops there was an evident request to decentralize these spaces, besides reflecting on the higher participation of the

members during the workshop execution process, which was totally under the control of the NGOs. During the last two decentralized workshops, the members of the Group undertook to present the work carried out by them and to facilitate the team works in collaboration with the NGOs male and female professionals.

Lastly, in terms of political mobilization, women find it necessary to closely monitor the actions performed, such as the delivery of letters to decision makers. There is also a concern for a stronger positioning of the Group, which, unlike its grassroots organizations, requires more visibility for it to be recognized by other institutions.



Activity	What is required to make it more efficient?	How can we participate to make it efficient?	What are the obstacles for making it more efficient?
Newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Higher participation of OSBs in the newsletter process. -Guarantee that newsletters reach the grassroots. -More relevance to the work done in grassroots. -Larger amount of newsletters. -Broader dissemination of newsletters in other forums: Municipalities, Networks, Healthcare centers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Looking for allies in other OSBs to decentralize information. -Being present the day the newsletter is projected. -We can make visits and interview leaders. -Having efficient services for the delivery of newsletters to reach more women. -Reach more young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Failure to reach all grassroots, insufficient amount. -The query on newsletters is not addressed to the grassroots
Workshops with Women -Northern Lima Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support by other NGOs to put an end to workshops in other cones. -Workshops need to be proper of each cone. -We must present a report on workshops outcomes. -Define a venue to avoid interruptions during the workshop. -Achieve more communication and participation in coordinating the Workshop. -Invite organizations from all districts of the cone. -Attract groups of young people to the Workshop. -Guarantee that the call be addressed to our peers (women from OSBs). -Promote specific meetings with health secretaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Coordinating with speakers and securing their participation. -Getting ready to present the work of the Monitoring Group. -Participating in the coordination and facilitation of the workshop. -Getting closer to be able to team-work. Achieving better communication. -Updating the current directory. -Taking into account the health secretaries of the relevant cones. -Organizing open forums to disseminate the work of the Monitoring Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of interest from institutions: Municipalities, Healthcare centers, etc. -Difficulty to obtain the venue where to hold the workshop. -Invitations fail to reach destination in due time. -Proposals are not developed in the grassroots.
Political Mobilization: —Collect of signatures for letter to Magistrates. -Sit-down strike at San Bartolomé Hospital. -Mobilization in CONADES.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Commit ourselves to collect signatures and meet our purpose. -Participation of all Group members in the sit-down strike. -Control the due delivery of the letters. -Mobilize more comrades in the demonstrations. -Invite the media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Making a forum addressed to parliamentary women to make them aware of the work done by us. -Coordinating in advance for a better attendance of grassroots. -Finding out the outcomes of mobilizations. -Promoting higher participation of other representatives. -Lobbying with congresspeople. -Inviting more women from my organization. -Group members binding ourselves to call women to mobilizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We don't support the convening organizations. We must help to coordinate and convene. -Authorities (congresspeople, mayors, etc) are not aware of the work of the Group.

From the welfare of others to our own welfare: impact of the Women's Monitoring Group performance

The impact of the women of the Monitoring Group since its creation in 2004 may be classified in two dimensions: first, the redefinition of the profile of health promoters as regards to health issues concerning themselves and the community; second, the transition between the health promotion and prevention actions and the monitoring actions over healthcare centers.

As regards to redefining the profile of health promoters related to health issues concerning themselves and the community, it is worth mentioning the process whereby organized women, specially health promoters, have included the issue of women's health –i.e., of their own health- within their actions and discourses. This impact is not originated in the work of the Monitoring Group; rather, it comes from the promoters who start to get involved with feminist agendas related to the women's right to decide.

The Monitoring Group is probably one of the expressions of this process whereby organized women start to broaden their agendas in terms of community's health issues (TBC, oral rehydration, vaccination campaigns and care to patients in healthcare centers) to include problems directly affecting women.

This process represents an incessant work of women, which starts –in the case of the Monitoring Group- by reflecting on the need and relevance of tackling their own health matters (including menopause, family planning, nutrition); then comes the discussion of these demands in different public spaces (district concertation tables and work tables with local and national authorities). These spaces were those in which women shaped a discourse expected to consider women's health as part of the needs of the community. A clear example of the above is the work developed by organized women of the Independencia district to include, within the participatory budget, a health-related project, initially devised to deal with TBC prevention which later included elements for HIV/aids prevention.

Mobilization would be the third step of this process, where women from popular organizations –specifically those integrating the Group- gradually included the attention to sexual and reproductive health within their social demands.

The second dimension in analyzing the impact of the performance of Monitoring Group women is the transition they undertake between the health promotion and prevention actions and the monitoring action. This process has led many women to question their role before the public sector; in the case of health promoters, before the medical staff, in other cases, before municipal authorities or even officers of the central government.

This questioning decentralizes the complementary relationship of many promoters for example with the healthcare institution, which often translated into placing themselves within the organizational structure of the institution and consequently entering in the logic of the hierarchical relationship with the health staff, undertaking support tasks which are surely fundamental but were connected to the logic of complementing extra-mural responsibilities (outside facilities) or attending patients in waiting rooms.

The logics of exigibility, which gained strength with the arrival of the commitments of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Women's World Conference in Beijing, led the work of feminist organizations and, in general, of organizations promoting the right to health to firmly incorporate the matter of citizen monitoring as part of a right.

Citizen monitoring is taken by the women's popular movement as a practice intended to help to improve the attention in healthcare centers; this goal -is often misinterpreted by the medical staff- has certain characteristics, such as obtaining information on the situation of the healthcare center and of the attention, drafting reports that later turn into base documents for making recommendations to the healthcare center.

Furthermore, in the experience of the women of the Monitoring Group, the citizen monitoring also led to obtaining information around the situation of healthcare centers in order to -in articulation with civil society organizations, mainly those connected to the right to health and to women's rights- carry out denunciation actions and submit claims to central government authorities regarding the amount of attention received by women.

Henry Moore



In this regard, we believe that the citizen monitoring practice of women from popular movements, specially those engaged in the Monitoring Group, has contributed to redefining the relationship with the health staff, in the case of promoters, but also with local authorities, with whom they have always carried out actions for health promotion and for the prevention of family violence, among others.

These relationships, although with frequent tense episodes as reported by many of them, has led to revalue organized women, as their role not only is in line with the support they can provide, but also turns them into allies, colleagues entitled to give their opinion and make recommendations and claims from the position they hold.

In short, the exercise of citizen monitoring and the inclusion of women agendas—some of them referred to the autonomy of their bodies (including violence against women and access to contraceptive methods) in the work of their organizations is an impact that was achieved by the consolidation of women groups who started tackling issues of sexual and reproductive rights in permanent relation with feminist organizations and those dedicated to the right to health.

This is the impact that contributes to consolidate the discourse on women's right to decide; yet, we still have to check the processes whereby the agenda of sexual and reproductive rights filters the actions of the women's popular movement. Although the position gained by these women in their monitoring role entitles them to claim for their body, there still exists the social punishment to those who undertake liberating agendas including sexual pleasure and the right to abortion.




Connections with feminism: lessons learnt in working sexual and reproductive rights with women from social organizations.

The articulation with the women's popular movement has been an intense process for us feminist women. Back in the nineties there were reflections on the need (and sometimes the urgency) to root feminist movement political proposals in the agendas and performances of the women's popular movement.

The nineties were years where articulations were possible on the basis of common agendas, specially those connected to social programs, but the possibilities to articulate in the area of health –specifically in sexual and reproductive health- were also coming to light. The impact of the ICPD and the Women's World Conference will be key to this context.

In the year two thousand there emerged the need to answer from the various spaces to the challenges left by a decade marked by the violation of the democratic system, the instrumentalization of women's organizations and the disastrous experience of forced tubal ligations, while we entered into a capitalist context where the sexual and reproductive health agenda would suffer the effects of the arrival of fundamentalist groups and figures.

It is in this context that there appears another possibility of rapprochement with the women's popular movement, specifically with health promotion organizations. This possibility proposed to strengthen the monitoring activities on the health sector, but with an emphasis on denouncing the potential retreats and hindrances for the women's sexual and reproductive health agenda.



This urgency led to establish the OSBs' Monitoring Group of Women from Metropolitan Lima, the same urgency that facilitated the creation of a similar committee among feminist organizations and those working for the right to health.

While we understand the value that the establishment of the Women's Monitoring Group had, it is proper to point out the specific context where it was established. Undoubtedly, it arises in the light of a situation of depolitization of the social fabric, where the political strengthening efforts of the eighties had been replaced by the work of skills and the acquisition of tools for "advocacy" and all the liberal logic it represented, including the individualization of sexual and reproductive health by detaching it from a more complex social and political situation.

We believe that the first issue to be analyzed in this articulation is the rapprochement between feminists and organized women, within a context where the "urgencies" to defend the advances accomplished on sexual and reproductive health invisibilizes

a number of constituting elements of both spaces such as -as mentioned above- a strong depolitization of these organizations, the irruption of the logic of development project and the relation of dependence frequently existing between feminist organizations and organized women.

In the case of the Monitoring Group of Women's OBSs, this led to an activism limited by the NGO's —occasionally feminist- agenda, without the possibility of bringing to light a more autonomous project where the relationship between feminist organizations and women's organizations could be more equitable.

At this point it is worth mentioning that some feminist organizations criticized this relationship; however, the tendency of the group of organizations articulating with the Women's Monitoring Group was not to entangle this relationship.

Yet, criticism brought about the dilemma whether to proceed in this articulation, considering that it was deemed necessary to propose the women of the Monitoring Group to undergo an autonomous process that goes beyond keeping a relationship based on development projects and that is rather based on a political stake that facilitates shared decision-making, autonomous spaces for women to make their own decisions, and strengthens the skills required to keep at pace with the new environment (use of e-mail, analysis of the reality, training on specific issues connected to sexual and reproductive health).

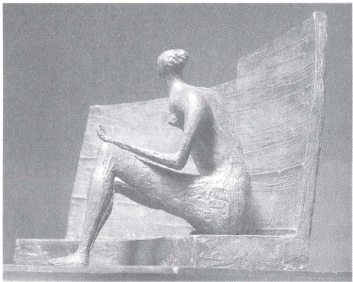
This possibility also opened the door to spaces for the discussion of issues such as sexual diversity in women, undoubtedly the beginning of a rapprochement on the basis of the agendas more engaged with women's freedom of body.

An evaluation performed at the beginning of 2007 included some spaces of reflection on the bonds between the women leaders of the Monitoring Group and feminism. The following are the answers to the question on the characteristics they shared with the feminists:

Characteristics we share with the feminists

1. They don't want to be framed in a single model.
2. They protest and express their ideas and stances in public.
3. The protest creatively.
4. Feminism is a movement formed by women who question and criticize.
5. They reject passivity and submissiveness.
6. They criticize the social, economic and political system we live in.
7. They pursue equality between men and women: equality in power and equality of opportunities.
8. There are several types of feminisms.
9. Anyone in agreement with the above may be a feminist.

These spaces of confidence and dialogue, besides generating conditions to politically strengthen the women leaders of the Monitoring Group, have facilitated the connection between the exercise of rights and the democratic practices characteristic of women organizations. One of these reflections was geared towards the importance of changes in representation, for example.

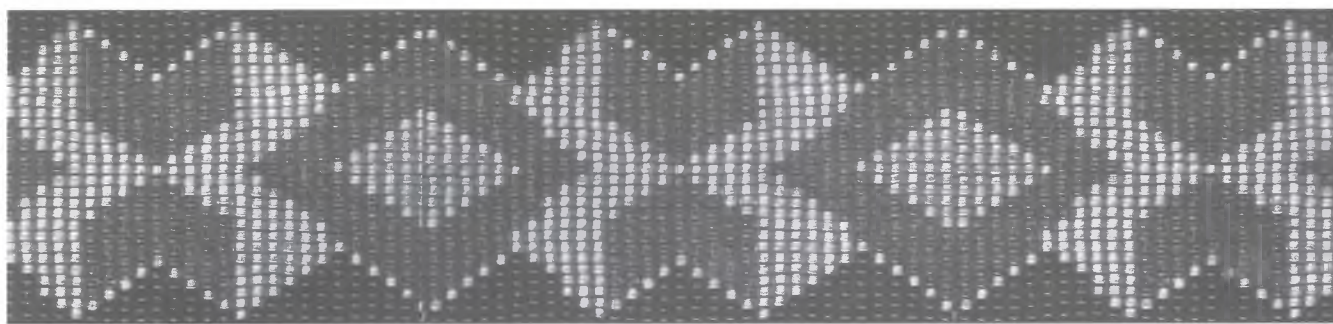


These notes undoubtedly single out the tangles we have to focus on in order to accomplish an increasingly stronger articulation between feminists and the women's popular movement. The proposal of advancing in an entwined manner between spaces of experiential reflection -such as the meetings to tackle the issue of lesbian identity and the pleasure in women- and spaces of political reflection frames the work of the Monitoring Group in what we call the body politics, a space where social demands such as work and nutrition merge with those connected to women's sexed body.



It is body politics and its anchoring in the logics of the women's popular movement the challenge we must focus on in this articulation; the strategies and methodology will represent a new issue based on the ethical-political dimension of our actions ♦





Project: Women and the Constituent Assembly

Teresa Lanza Monge
Bolivia

The Political Constitution of the State as a basis for a country's legal system needs to establish regulations that guarantee the equality between men and women; yet, this aspect has not been observed throughout our history.

That is why the process that Bolivia is currently undergoing constitutes a favorable frame to transform unequal relations. The Constituent Assembly offers the society as a whole the opportunity to participate directly in the drafting of a new Political Constitution of the State.

This article reflects the collective work of diverse women who are firmly determined to contribute to the construction of an equal society, with social inclusion and justice for men and women.

During the last years, Bolivia has undergone serious political-institutional crises that led to the weakening of the democratic system and of the Rule of Law. The need to change and transform these structures has been evidenced through different social conflicts and mobilizations.

Although in 1990, the indigenous peoples from the Bolivian East demanded the recognition of the indigenous territories and the realization of a Constituent Assembly, the demand for changing of the country by means of a new Constitution is shaped –according to some specialists – from the so-called “Water War” (Guerra del Agua) in April, 2002. This uprising took place in the city of Cochabamba and “gave hope back” not only to the country but to the whole Latin America in the sense that the neoliberal model could collapse: water cannot be privatized. Rural women and women from popular sectors stood by men and young people in this struggle that challenged the economic model indisputably.

The so-called “Gas War” (Guerra del Gas) (September and October, 2003) started in the city of El Alto, and led to the resignation and expulsion of the President of the Republic Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and to the commitment of Vice President Carlos Mesa – who took up the Presidency - to promote a Referendum on Bolivian gas.

However, the situation of social agitation aggravated in 2005 and resulted in the resignation of President Carlos Mesa. He was succeeded by Dr. Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé, who during his presidency promulgated the Decree calling for presidential general elections as well as – for the first time – for the election by popular vote of Departmental Governors (December, 2005) and the creation of the Constituent Assembly.

Upon the consolidation of the process and after assuming the presidency on January 22, 2006, the new President Evo Morales – elected with

54% of the votes – executed his first measures: the calling for elections for the designation of 255 men and women as members of the Constituent Assembly and the Referendum on Departmental Autonomies on July 2, 2006. Both measures were supported by the population and reflected the democratic nature of the new government.

These facts mark the commencement of the Constituent Assembly process, a fact of great significance in Bolivia's history. In this context, demands from different sectors of the population converged in a higher participation and inclusion in the decision-making process, a new social agreement with “new rules of the game”, redistribution of wealth and reduction of poverty for the construction of a fair State with social justice and inclusion. This situation opened more than ever the possibility for historically discriminated sectors to get involved in the process, and resulted in a qualitative step forward in the transformation of protests into profound and historic political proposals closely related to women, where women have a lot to see, to express and - even more - to decide.

Women's situation

Bolivia is a society based on a patriarchal power that reproduces inequalities and oppressions hampering the equity of gender relations. Despite the recognition of the vital role of women in the development of the country and the existence of various national and international juridical and legal instruments in favour of women's rights, no gender balance has been achieved in any of the spaces for decision-making.

Initial and professional education is unequal; the sexual and reproductive health problems and those associated to maternity are still the leading cause for diseases and death; the number of HIV/AIDS cases among women has increased; the female informal economy has incorporated younger and younger and older and older women in view of the lack of formal work; all forms of violence have intensified with the addition of political violence or arrest, and, to cap it all, , everyday we witness the prevalence of a sexist language in most visual, verbal and written expressions.

On the other hand, we are facing greater gender discrimination and increasing racist attitudes.

Some statistical data may help to describe women's situation.

- Women receive an average of 50% of the income received by men, regardless of age, kind of activity, occupation and education level.

62,2% of the total of youngsters and adolescents in school-age who do not attend the school are women, and of the total illiterate youngsters in the rural area 77,6% are women.

Rejection and expulsion of pregnant students from schools is still a customary practice.

In the city of La Paz, 7 in 10 women were victims of domestic violence.

- The number of children per woman is 4,0 in the urban area, and 6,3 in the rural area. The number of children wanted is 2,6 according to women's statements.

Over 100 young women die every year during pregnancy.

- One in three adolescents become a mother before the age of 20 years

- In Bolivia, 230 women die for every one hundred thousand children born alive, (the highest maternal mortality rate in Latin America and The Caribbean) due to pregnancy complications.

- Four rapes are reported each day. Only 10% of rapes are reported.

117 cases of political arrest and violence against women reach the decision-making spaces

- Women are not present in the hierarchical instances of the different social organizations, they do not have access to or influence on the decision-making process.

It is a kind of schizophrenia. It cannot be denied that progress has been made in the struggle for gender equality in the country; yet, the progress has proved to be insufficient. Participation in equal conditions both in the public and in the private spaces of the society as well as the role of women within the family context must be recognized and valued by the State and the society as the indispensable mechanisms for achieving full development.

In the light of this situation, the initiative "Women and Constituent Assembly" undertakes the challenge to conceive the redesign of the State in order to transform the unequal relations that generate exclusion and discrimination particularly of indigenous women.

Articulating forces for an inclusive proposal

Upon the imminence of a Constituent Assembly, there emerged the project "Women and Constituent Assembly" promoted by the Coordinator of Women, a network that gathers private development institutions at the national level to increase the participation of women in power and decision-making instances within the local, departmental and national development fields.

The Coordinator of Women was joined by the Women's National Political Forum –a forum integrated by women members of political parties which promotes the position of women within the spaces of political decision and furthers public policies as equality instruments; the Women's Articulation for Equality and Equity (AMUPEI)- an instance that monitors the Beijing Platform which develops promotion, lobby and surveillance actions of the gender agendas of the State and supports the articulation of women's organizations and movements at the national level; and, lastly, it was joined by the Women's Platform project that gathers women representatives of women's and feminist organizations and institutions and other members not belonging to any institution but committed to the progress of women.

These organizations started in 2004 by committing themselves to the challenge of participating actively and effectively in the definition of the new Political Constitution of the State (CPE) taking into account the criteria of inclusion, gender equality social justice and interculturality.

Other mixed and women's organizations and institutions joined the project throughout the process, such as Catholics for the Right to Decide/Bolivia, which became the institutional basis of the Technical Team of the Department of La Paz, as well as other social women's organizations.

This initiative gave rise to the "Movement of Women Present in History" at the national level, in the context of changes the country is undergoing for the construction of a pluricultural and pluriethnic society.

For the first time women have the opportunity to join their voices and claims together with those of other social movements and organizations of the civil society submitting proposals of deep transformation to the Constituent Assembly.

Principles of the proposal

The consolidation of the women's network articulation gave way to the construction of consensus to draft the principles of the proposal:

Principle of Equity

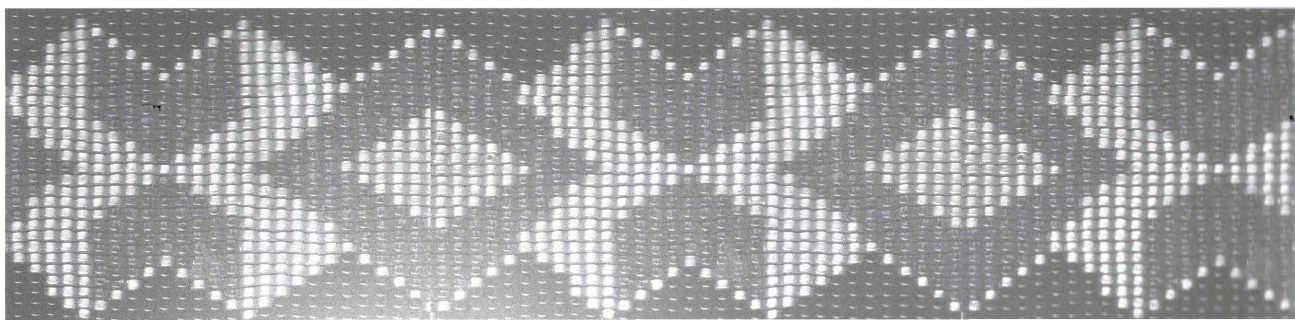
It deals with economic redistribution, redistribution of power, access to decision-making and benefits of development under equal conditions for men and women.

Principle de Equality

The State must prohibit and penalize discrimination against women. We stress the principle of legal equality for men and women insofar as it guarantees the equality of opportunities and the access to the exercise and enjoyment of human rights.

Principle of Recognition of Specific Rights

We assert the need to recognize rights related to the sexual differences that characterize men and women and especially those connected to sexual and reproductive rights and to gender violence.



Principle of Positive Action

This principle refers to the juridical differentiated treatment that allows facing the inequalities or gaps existing between men and women and between regions and population sectors in the society. It deals with the application of corrective measures intended to generate the conditions required in order to accelerate equality by reducing or compensating the gaps that obstruct the exercise and enjoyment of women's rights.

Principle for the Ratification of Rights

It proposes to raise to the level of Constitutional Rights all International Treaties and Conventions subscribed by the Bolivian State and approved as a law, where the exercise and enjoyment of rights and freedoms of women are protected in terms of equity and equality.

Principle of Non-Sexist Language

Modifications in the wording of the Political Constitution of the State (CPE) are indispensable in order to contribute to strengthen non-discrimination against women. Language is not a casual or neutral creation of the human mind but a social and historic product that influences the perception of reality.

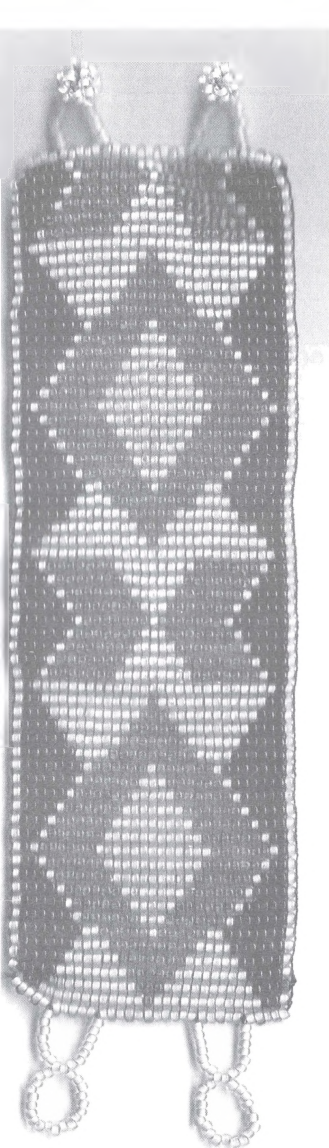
Secular State

The State must recognize the freedom of worship guaranteeing the freedom of conscience and the public exercise of every cult or religion to the extent permitted by the applicable legislation. The State may not interfere in the *individual sphere of freedom of each citizen*.

These principles are the basis and transversal axis of the specific and precise proposals presented for the future Magna Carta to define the type and structure of the State, the individual and collective Rights and the different regimes: Economic, Labour and Financial, Land, Territory and Natural Resources and the Social and Family.

Strategies and actions

Six action strategies have been defined to accomplish the objectives pursued: Education and Training, Promotion of Consensus Building, Advocacy, Communication and Dissemination, Production of Knowledge and Articulation of Women's Movement at departmental and national levels. Several actions were developed in the framework of these strategic lines of work.



During the period prior to installation of the Constituent Assembly and for it to remain faithful to the inclusion and participation principles, the principles of parity and alternation (Principle of Positive Action) were included in the *Special Law of Call to the Constituent Assembly*. Subsequently, enforceability actions to political parties, citizens' groups and indigenous peoples were developed with the intention of incorporating women as candidates for the Assembly; likewise, a follow-up in the National Electoral Court and Departmental Courts was carried out in order to guarantee that women's candidacy for the assembly be included.

In a first stage, the women's movement was focused on training workshops about issues such as the State and the Law, Political Constitution of the State and Human Rights, which were carried out in the provinces and municipalities of the country, prioritizing the rural areas of the whole country, visibilizing the active participation of the indigenous women.

Proposals of women toward the Constituent Assembly were drafted later with the participation of over 20,000 women on behalf of 1,000 national organizations and 12 matrix organizations in 400 workshops and meetings in over 150 urban and rural municipalities; this gave rise to the document called "From Protest to Mandate: a proposal under Construction" (*De la Protesta al Mandato: Una propuesta en construcción*) which will be further enriched with the participation and consensus of other players and social movements and with citizens' discussion as well.

Proposals are mainly focused on the model and structure of the Bolivian State, individual and collective Human Rights, there are proposals for the economic, financial, labour and social regimes, and, lastly, proposals on land and territory.

The second stage, once the basic platform of proposals was set, was dedicated to the construction of alliances with mixed and women's organizations, with institutions working on women's human rights and the media. To these effects, there were formal and informal meetings held to present the women's proposals and to socialize the work performed by the movement. Most of these organizations showed interest and underlined the contribution of women to the wording of a new constitution.

Upon the installation of the Constituent Assembly, proposals were formally submitted to the women members of the assembly thus preparing the ground to establish alliances around the women's agenda. Advocacy actions especially addressed to assembly women – without leaving aside assembly men, political players and opinion leaders - were carried out in each Department of the country. This work is constantly accompanied by communication and mobilization actions.

First accomplishments

Positioning of women's proposals

The proposal drafted by the women's organizations was valued in the different departmental spaces, where its consistency, legitimacy (over 20,000 women participated in the process nationwide), content – including background, principles and proposals in different regimes – and the sense of demand and inclusion of women in the new constitutional text were highlighted.

The positioning of proposals at women's organization level was very strong; yet, in a broader and more public sphere, although the contribution of women was acknowledged, the polarization of the political debate has minimized the visibility of these proposals.

From the local to the departmental

Firstly, the proposals were socialized in women's organizations of the Department of La Paz (urban area) by means of workshops, with the intention of identifying consensus and establishing alliances.

From the different realities and insights of colonizing and country women, unionists, women from rural-popular areas, self-employed women and professionals, common and consensus issues have been identified and the initial proposal has been enhanced. This process has also allowed the organizations involved to undertake the ultimate purpose of the movement and to assume their commitment more decisively.

In a second phase, the territorial encounters have proved to be favourable spaces for the incorporation of our proposal into the debate and reflection of mixed and women's organizations leaders of the different districts and directly into the speeches of the assembly women.



Likewise, there have been contacts and meetings with assembly members (men and women), representatives of collegiate organizations, instances related to the procedures of the Constituent Assembly, trade union organizations and others, mainly to socialize the proposal or certain specific subjects connected to it.

Alliances and strengthening of the Movement

The articulation and participation of women representing different organizations and women activists in general has been essential for the initiative implementation strategy, hence evidencing the capacity of articulating a wide scope of forms of organizations and discourse within the broad women's movement.

Some of the most significant organizations involved are: Association of Mothers' Centres of macro districts 3 and 4 (this is one of the largest organizations involved in the project since its inception), Centre of Popular Culture (mothers' centres of the Northern area that gather around 800 women), Network of Women Unionists and Women Workers (a nationwide network with specific proposals for the Constituent Assembly), National Federation of Household Workers (matrix organization with strong bonds with the MAS party) and the Federation of Workers of the National Emergency Employment Plan (PLANE) (large organization with defined leaderships).

Advocacy work

The implementation of advocacy actions has given prevalence of the assembly women and within them the officialist sector in particular as it is the majority group in the Constituent Assembly (in La Paz, the MAS party has 8 assembly members and the PODEMOS Party has 1 assembly member). Women in the Constituent Assembly add up 33% (86 of 255), 74% of which belong to the Movement to Socialism (MAS) Party, therefore identified with the struggles of social movements and with the popular and indigenous demands above the gender considerations.

At first, we perceived a strong questioning by the assembly members to the proposal and operation of the women's movement. A large number of them is of *aymara* and *quechua* origin, quite distant from the women's movement and have a strong rejection to the feminist claims.

However, within the discussion and debate spaces (work breakfasts, territorial meetings), most assembly members of the department showed some interest and initial support to them. The territorial meetings have led to the construction of a direct relationship and dialogue with the female assembly members, opening the possibility to question the related stereotypes and prejudices about women's demands and to incorporate historical proposals of the movement in their discourses.

Although the work with male assembly members was limited, it was nevertheless significant to the extent that we achieved important agreements and supports for specific issues, mainly with those assembly members who have a high level of influence on their environment.

Obstacles on the road

The most relevant issue in the local public debate was, undoubtedly, the right to life proposed by the women, which has mobilized and alerted the different organizations of the women's movement both at the local and the national level.

The applicability, viability and scopes of issues like the Secular State, retirement, recognition and democratization of domestic work, gender parity and alternation and sexual and reproductive rights were discussed within different fields by assembly members, representatives of women's organizations (allied and not allied), opinion leaders, representatives of mixed organizations and by the citizenship in general.

Issues related to land use and ownership and to gender parity and alternation in public posts were relevant in the mixed and women's organizations of the rural area.

Initially, speeches and stances of male and female assembly members of the Podemos Party were contrary to the issues of Secular State, unicameral parliament, retirement and sexual and reproductive rights. However, they expressed their adherence and support to subjects as gender equity, right to a life free of violence, measures for positive action, and recognition of the domestic work, among the most relevant.

The speeches and stances of the MAS assembly members were more radical considering that equality and equity between men and women are deep-rooted practices in their culture (aymara). From an analysis of the real situation of subordination, exclusion and discrimination of rural women, issues such as political rights (parity and alternation), recognition of domestic work, right to a life free of violence, and the right to land were incorporated into their speeches.

The right to life from conception approved by the commission on rights and duties has generated a series of postures and discourses contrary to our proposals, not only from the opposition but from the government authorities as well.

On May 24, the Duties, Rights and Guarantees Commission of the Constituent Assembly made public a document containing the "first agreements" about the draft of a list of rights. This list contained the right to life from conception obtaining the dissent of 3 of the 9 assembly members of the Commission; the arguments came from fundamentalist sides.

This stance alerted the women's movement, and the Human Rights institutions organized advocacy actions to persuade the assembly members to take into account the respect for life with no constraints in accordance with the principles and basics of the Human Rights.

Reason prevailed, and the Rights, Duties and Guarantees Commission changed its posture and voted again on the right to life from conception, thus disregarding the consensus agreement and establishing the "right to life" with no constraints whatsoever.

Other accomplishments refer to the commitment by different commissions to ratify previous agreements in the work with mixed commissions that will meet soon.

To elevate this religious dogma to the constitutional level will represent ignoring the reality of women in Bolivia where, according to official statistics, 6 in 10 annual pregnancies are unwanted, where 5 women resort to abortion every hour, 120 each day, 44,000 a year. The legislation criminalizing abortion will never prevent women from the need of interrupting an unwanted pregnancy; on the contrary, this type of legislation dramatically increases the number of abortions in unsafe conditions that often put in risk the life and health of women, as shown by the fact that a woman dies every six days in Bolivia as a consequence of an unsafe abortion. This reality affects mainly rural, indigenous women and women of scarce resources, who are the majority in the country.

In contrast, the fundamentalist sectors of different fractions of religious organizations have activated lobby mechanisms to promote the right to life from conception with the intention of constitutionalizing it.

Dissemination and Information Actions

The presence of the movement spokeswomen in the local media has been insufficient and has been limited to the dissemination of specific actions (mobilization, forum, meetings) and/or to the subjects in debate (secular State, right to life from conception). Yet, these spaces in tv and radio media served to keep the citizenship informed and sensitized about the importance of the proposals developed by women.

The restricted coverage of the media, especially television, to disseminate the proposals or to take a stand about any specific issue has been a significant obstacle in the achievement of a greater presence. Very few television and radio programs gave us the possibility to address the audience, in these cases most of the presenters were sensitized about the subject and/or were women. On the other hand, the current political, social and economic issues marred the dissemination of our proposals.

Difficulties

- A conservative society, male and female assembly members with conservative and radical stands
- Fundamentalist discourses that gave us no chance to exposing our proposals
- Little interest and coverage of the media on "women" issues
- Deterioration of the Constituent Assembly in public opinion
- Delay and Confusion in the fulfilment of the CA schedule
- Lack of capacity and/or political will of the central players to build consensus within the commissions
- Party interference (government and opposition parties) leading to the imposition of radical and party-based stances and agendas
- Positioning of sensitive issues as the 2/3, departmental autonomies, full captaincy (*capitanía plena*), university autonomies, which have not only generated tensions within the Assembly but also reflected in the departmental, regional and national context
- Difficulty to identify the core issues in our proposals
- Absence of a political posture of the movement
- Weak management of our proposal arguments
- Lack of clarity with regards to negotiable and unnegotiable issues
- Lack of permanent advice to the spokeswomen

Lessons learnt

- To include the proposal as a whole was not strategic in the light of an unfavourable context
- Organizations' participation and articulation is crucial for the development of an advocacy project
- Clear targets and objectives of our actions is needed
- We must have a forward-looking approach

- The importance of identifying the allies and work on their sensitization in order to guarantee their support
- To find the balance point between the rationality and the strength of our actions
- To value the personal commitment of the representatives of the organizations has been vital to consolidate their participation
- We must have an immediate-reaction strategy

First results

Impacts appeared immediately: if we review the document - the basis for the work of the Constituent Assembly proposed by the Movement to the Socialism, the party in government- we see that it introduces for the first time in Bolivian history a section exclusively devoted to women rights. It regulates women protection under situations of violence, the exercise of women sexuality and the right to own and hold land, among others, which were also furthered by the Movement of Women Present in History. The rights mentioned are set out under the first section of Chapter II, regarding cultural, social and economic rights.

The specific section is called Women's Rights, and is composed of an article with five paragraphs, that establishes that women have the following rights:

- a** "To a life free from physical, sexual and psychological violence, both in the family and in society".
- b** "To the exercise of her sexual and reproductive rights".
- c** "To have access to political participation and representation spaces, with gender parity and alternation".

d "To own and hold land, regardless of the civil status".

e "To work, without being dismissed or discriminated against due to her civil status, pregnancy, age, number of sons and daughters, in the public and private".

The immediate future

As we are finishing this document, the Constituent Assembly is prevented from going on with its work for a political event outside the Assembly itself. This break gave us a rest and encouraged us to take the next steps, such as to follow up the discussions in the Mixed Commissions to be formed within the Constituent Assembly, where each of the consensus and surely the conservative forces will be evaluated, political parties and churches will press so that the Secular State, the right to life, the sexual and reproductive rights and the recognition of sexual diversities be the object of new debates in plenary sessions, and even that a referendum or a plebiscite be held before their inclusion in the Magna Carta.

Women are still the leading actresses of the Constituent Assembly process. From the streets, in the media, from their diversities, boosted by the need to claim their rights and the desire for profound changes for themselves and for all the country, they will not rest in the struggle to banish the patriarchal and colonialist bases over which the Bolivian States has been founded.

They will be standing on their feet, supervising the evolution of the constituent process in order to avoid any further delay in the construction of a legitimate social agreement containing their aspirations and stances, with full recognition to their rights ♦



For a democratic political culture against all discriminations

Maridí González Parini y Carmen Vallejo
Paraguay

The Paraguayan Women's Coordinating Committee (Coordinación de Mujeres del Paraguay) has undergone an extensive discussion to decide the systematization of a process to be shared with experiences chosen by the peers of the other countries member of the Articulación Feminista Marcosur. This work explains the process developed in the frame of the creation and proposal of a bill against all kinds of discrimination and the subsequent creation of the Network articulated around it. This systematization has adopted a simple design that deals with the feminist leaderships of the process, its description, an analysis on the political significance of the process and, lastly, the lessons learnt.

Feminist Leaderships

The process of creation of the Network Against All Forms of Discrimination was fostered by the leadership of feminist women and their organizations, who promoted the idea of creating spaces for discussing the issue of discriminations from a more global perspective.

When we talk about leadership we refer to Bryman's concept (1992:91): *"the ability to effectively define, articulate and communicate a vision in the heart of his or her organization, even if it is as vague as a dream or as precious as an objective or a mission"*². In this case there are many organizations involved, as set out under the paragraphs below.

The first stage (*initiative stage*), characterized by the Agreement for Non Discrimination, was articulated by the Center of Documentation and Studies (CDE), led by Line Bareiro, a renowned leader of the Paraguayan feminist movement; the Social Development and Equity Committee of the Senate, then led by Ilda Mayeregger, a person specially sensitized to feminist issues; and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), represented by a renowned feminist who, just like Line Bereiro, was on certain occasion a member of the Paraguayan Women's Coordinating Committee (CMP)³. This articulation of organizations, clearly led by feminists, is aimed at mobilizing supports, fostering a process for a "public, extensive and pluralist discussion"⁴ in the Paraguayan society, and elaborating a project against all forms of discrimination in Paraguay.

The commitment of the feminists who commanded this process has been more than personal, as they succeeded in getting their organizations to be involved, participate and continue the process.

The second stage of *discussion, participation and knowledge-production* was characterized by the contribution of theoretical reflections on discriminations in the country, including the juridical dimension, where there was also a significant contribution from the feminist theory on discrimination based on sex and gender, as well as from other sectors who broadened the discussion towards areas such as ethnic group, language, disability, generation, poverty, migration and religion. Also, the CDE has contributed the juridical dimension that turns into a proposal of anti-discriminatory legislation in Paraguay with the input of Hugo Valiente, a human rights attorney.

By means of the active participation in the nationwide discussion forums there is an increasing number of people and organizations joining in support of the proposal. It is from the new organizations that other feminists or people with feminist thinking make their contribution to the network.

The third period or *stage of public influence and broadening of alliances* ended with the constitution of the Network Against All Forms of Discrimination.

One of the main activities of this stage were the workshops in public speaking and on proposal arguments, which intended to provide all participating groups with people able to efficiently and effectively defend the proposals of the

Network, both in lobby activities and panels and in the media, it being essential for all of them to be able to defend the proposal integrally, rather than exclusively on the issues that directly concerned them as a specific group. This training was also conducted by a feminist⁵, Rosa Posa, member of Aireana, Lesbian Rights Group, and the Paraguayan Women's Coordinating Committee (CMP).

Besides, it is this group of lesbians who invites and articulates with other gay and homosexual groups, taking advantage of their experience regarding the relevance of being more inclusive in these kinds of proposals, even by proposing activities with international advisors such as María Elena Ovando, framed as an activity of the network proposal, thus providing an international interlocution and dimension to the initiative.

The challenge of going beyond the self interests of the different groups, even among feminists with the thought of equality and difference, is met at each step; the greatest accomplishment is to overcome those differences and build a proposal for the society as a whole. The development of the initiative was presented as a process ruled by achievements and advances.

Even when the initiatives clearly come from the feminist sector, the purpose of the Network was not just to answer the women's needs and to look for strategic allies around this purpose, but to articulate with other organizations who fight from different fronts against specific forms of discrimination. Therefore, the objective giving rise to the Network was: *"to create a space where to reflect on discriminations that would help to kick-off a more pluralist task, engaging more civil society players to give us more clues and give their opinion, analysis and reflection around the issue of non-discrimination"*⁶. At the same time, the intention was to understand and to visibilize the discrimination concept, and its applications and effects.

It was precisely the active participation and the discussions with other groups -other than women groups- that enriched and facilitated this broader vision of the discrimination concept, turning this initiative into a pluralist, global and democratic initiative with influence on public policies, unprecedented in Paraguay.

Process for Non-discrimination

Beginning and motivations

The Paraguayan Constitution of 1992 under its Article 46 prohibits any type of discrimination; however it is not yet regulated, so it is almost inapplicable in the practice. The constitutional prohibition has not translated into a practice of coexistence or into an action for the passing of laws, or into an aim of public policies. To this date, whoever discriminates –whether an individual or the State- remains totally unpunished in Paraguay.

Some time after its coming into force, several civil society organizations started indicating the lack of a regulating law as an obstacle to the actual effectiveness of the provisions under Article 46 of the Constitution. Women's organizations were principally a referent in this aspect⁷.

In 2003 there started this process of work against all forms of discrimination, starting from the impetus given by the Senator Ilda Mayeregger, from the chair of the Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee of the Honourable House of Representatives of Paraguay, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Center of Documentation and Studies (CDE).

The process began with a reflection on the multiple discriminations and with the search of mechanisms available to confront them within the Comparative law. The result of this reflection was the book "Discriminations and Discriminating Measures"⁸ (*Discriminaciones y Medidas Antidiscriminatorias*) a document that gathers 10 theoretical articles about different forms of discrimination in Paraguay (by race, language, to indigenous people, for disability, sex and gender, to age groups, for sexual orientation, political reasons, and two reflections on discriminations and on citizenship-building) and the systematization of antidiscriminatory legislation in 35 countries.





Non-Discrimination Agreement

One of the main conclusions of this document of work was that the absence of an appropriate legal punishment in Paraguay to discriminatory practices leads to the vulnerability of the victims due to the lack of protective mechanisms to help them disregard the discriminatory action or seek its punishment.

Legislative and judicial actions may contribute to a Paraguay free from discriminations, provided that regulations based on a comprehensive discussion be materialized. Thus, Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee of the Senate, the Social Equity and Gender Commission of the House of Representatives, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Center for Documentation and Studies (CDE) subscribed the *Non-Discrimination Agreement*, subsequently added to the Committee of Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs of the House of Representatives.

These institutions agreed to coordinate, during a three-year term, collective actions “*related to mobilizing supports and the process of discussion in the Paraguayan society and drafting a bill against all forms of discrimination*”.

The agreement is based on the belief that it isn't enough to draft a bill and submit it to parliamentary discussion. It is necessary to make a participatory process involving large sectors of the Paraguayan society in order to identify the specific forms of discrimination, discuss the potential punishments to discriminating people and the redress to victims, agreeing upon a legal text to include all concerns and proposals of the Paraguayan society.

Forums for citizen consultation

In 2004 there started the process of public and citizen discussion for the participatory elaboration of the bill. These forums for citizen consultation served as spaces for knowledge, discussion and debate among representatives of the civil society and the State on discrimination situations existing in Paraguay, and the content proposals for the draft bill. These forums were held in four main cities (Concepción, Filadelfia, Ciudad del Este and Encarnación), the capital city included, where two consultation forums took place.

The forums were attended both by departmental authorities and those of the Agreement. After the opening by local and parliamentary authorities, there was a panel to provide conceptual elements on discriminations. Following a lecture about the process of participatory elaboration of the bill there came a second lecture that dealt with non-discrimination as a concept, and the most frequent ways of its manifestation in the society. The panel ended by introducing the basis for the draft bill. The third part of the forums was opened to the participation of the attending citizenship.

The support material for citizen debates consisted of an information booklet based on the document on discriminations, which was delivered to the attendants as information material on the subject. Furthermore, a preliminary base document for the draft bill was elaborated and distributed.

The debate goes deeper

Once the first work document on discriminations was published, there emerged the need to draft a complementary document to include other forms of discrimination which were left out of the first study. The second volume included theoretical articles on discrimination for reasons of poverty, to people living with HIV/Aids (PVVS), to migrant people, in healthcare and for religious reasons. Additionally, there was added an article on anti-discriminatory regulations already existing in Paraguay.

Subsequently, in December 2005, both work documents were compiled and republished in a single volume, the book called *Discriminaciones*⁹.

At the same time, Hugo Valiente wrote a draft bill based on the proposals and changes submitted in the consultation forums. When the draft bill was in an advanced wording process, another consultation forum with some 50 male and female specialists was organized to collect opinions, suggestions and corrections to the base document of the draft bill. This specialized consultation aimed at finding solutions to the main weaknesses identified in the elaboration of the draft bill, related to the lack of definition of the administrative entity that would be in charge of receiving claims and taking the relevant actions to ensure that the mechanism prescribed is not symbolic but that it represents an efficient tool for punishing discrimination.

Actions in 2006

In 2006, priority was given to the participatory revision activities of the draft bill. From June to July, 2006, the draft was revised internally by the organizations of the Agreement, to be further analyzed by jurists specialized in various human rights areas. During these meeting it was underscored the relevance and pertinence of having a law against all forms of discrimination, and the invited professionals bound themselves to support the initiative. They also contributed several ideas, the most outstanding of which was the suggestion to make the Human Rights Office of the Ministry of Justice and Labor the administrative instance against all forms of discrimination.

As the draft ripened, there took place a broader consultation with strategic sectors of the civil society distinguished by their incessant struggle against discriminations: groups of feminists, of gays and lesbians, of indigenous people and indigenists, of disabled people, of PLWHA (People Living with HIV/Aids) and of people working with the HIV. Subsequently and as a result of the discussions about the draft, it came clear that it was important to hold a meeting with the government instances who would be in charge of enforcing the law in case it be passed.

For consulting disabled people, there was a version of the draft bill prepared in Braille and another in auditory format (CD) for visually impaired people.

The answers to all consultations brought contributions which, in coming from different spheres and different groups that work for non-discrimination, enriched the document under review and helped to correct inconsistencies and errors and enhanced the text significantly.

The last activity carried out in the frame of the inter-institutional Agreement was a training course for spokespeople, which was attended by people from various organizations that work for non-discrimination. The person entrusted to conduct the course was Rosa Posa, a renowned feminist member of Aireana, a group for lesbians' rights and of the CMP¹⁰. Six workshops were held to create awareness of the other discriminations and to handle the draft bill for their defense. In addition, some commitments were accomplished for the defense of the draft bill upon its presentation to the Congress.

Constitution of the Network and Presentation of the Draft Bill

The end of this stage represented the closing of a phase and the opening of a new one in 2007, with the continuance of the works for the approval of the Bill Against All Forms Of Discrimination. In this regard, the *Network Against All Forms of Discrimination*¹¹ was constituted, with the motto: We are all equal, formed by people from different civil society organizations and some international agencies settled in the country, such as the United Nations System and Amnesty International. The tasks for future work include to monitor this new process, for which purpose working parties at the political/organizational, argumentative and communicational level were formed within the Network.

The bill was delivered to Senator Mirtha Vergara, Chair of the Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee, in a public act held in May 2007 in the bicameral hall of the National Congress. The day after, the draft was formally presented for legislative process by Senators Miguel Abdón Saguier and Carlos Filizzola. Then, there started the tasks for the defense and promotion of the bill in the legislative commissions and before the plenary of the Senate. The activities of the Network in the media brought about supports of great relevance to the development of the process. In July 2007, an agreement with the B'nait B'rith organization was subscribed and then there followed another agreement for the coordination of joint actions between the United Nations System in Paraguay and the Network Against All Forms of Discrimination. In these circumstances, representatives of the System decided to dedicate the United Nations Day to non-discrimination; a subject on which some of the Network organizations had been working for some years, basically supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The first activity of this agreement was the international seminar "Pluralism with Equality" in October 2007, with over 200 people present. The seminar was held in two days, with the participation of the highest-level representatives of human rights international organizations and institutions. There were international lecturers such as the regional representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the head of the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, (INADI) from Argentina, and the former National Coordinator of the High School for All (*Liceo para Todos*) program from Chile. Parliamentarians from different political sectors, both from the Senate and from the House of Representatives, also participated as speakers, as well as representatives of the civil society and intellectuals from our country.





Other significant accomplishments were the elaboration of bilingual materials for mass distribution, containing the process of participatory construction and the bill written in two languages: Spanish and Guaraní (Paraguay official language, disregarded in all other existing laws), and the presentation of the bill in Guaraní to the Senate expressly requesting that all other drafts be written in both languages.

At present, the discussion of the Bill Against All Forms of Discrimination by the Senate is pending till May 2008, when it will be presented before the plenary. It is expected a widespread participation, support and defense from organizations and people committed to human rights, articulations of feminists, indigenous people and indigenists, disabled people, gays and lesbians, people living with HIV/AIDS, people fighting for the recognition of the Guaraní language, relatives of the disappeared in dictatorship and a large sector of the progressive civil society of the country.

Political relevance of the process

For the Paraguayan political culture, the process against all forms of discrimination represents a qualitative change in the struggles for the effectiveness of human rights. And this is so, both for the issue of non-discrimination in itself –formerly absent of the social and political agenda– and for the coincidence of regional processes that are also dealing with the human rights from non-discrimination. The main right to non-discrimination offers people the possibility of acting directly in favor of equality, while it constitutes a principle that may be abstractly defined but that is difficult to materialize in the equality for each person, according to Giovanni Sartori¹².

The feminist leadership has proved able to have both a long-term vision and methods to facilitate the effective inclusion and the prominent role of discriminated groups as well as of citizen initiatives and institutions with a tradition of knowledge-production, of generation of democratic processes and actions against the main course of the country's political culture.

The political relevance may then be observed in the articulations generated in a four-year process and in the ways of having a bearing on the institutions and sensitivities. But probably the most important thing, from the point of view of the Articulación Feminista Marcosur, is the effort for systematizing different types of processes where the feminist leadership is able to mark a qualitative difference with our countries' political practices and the broadening of the feminist horizon, or at least of part of the feminism.

Non-discrimination

- *It concretizes the human rights concept that says that all human beings have rights because they are human beings.*

The foregoing idea is one of human rights more frequent notions. The process for non-discrimination revealed –at least in the Paraguayan case- that very often people still think that certain human beings don't have the right to have rights, or that they can have them in a restricted manner.

It may even be considered that future investigations on outlooks in Paraguay may give rise to a sort of scale in the social imagery as to who have the right to full citizenship and exercises it effectively, who have the exercise restricted but is deemed unfair that they cannot enjoy all rights (homeless girls and boys, indigenous people) and who are directly not socially considered to have the right to have rights, and are assigned a certain place in society –such as trans people- who were shamelessly destined to prostitution as the only labor possibility.

The primary right to non-discrimination was established by the Declaration of Philadelphia, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Human Rights Agreements, the American Convention on Human Rights, by almost any human rights instrument and in all Constitutions of our region. Yet, the steps leading to turn declarations into specific mechanisms for enforcing those rights are only now included in the agenda as regards to non-discrimination. This is not so in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, where non-discrimination was developed as a means to reach equality and the realization of the human rights.

- *The idea of modern democracy*

Chantal Mouffe defines modern democracy as a popular sovereignty with pluralism¹³. Pluralism is the egalitarian recognition of some societal diversities, that responds to the ideal of universal rights of the Illustration. The democratic political systems concretized in electoral systems have incorporated ideological diversities (or political associations, which are not always ideological) and territorial diversities.

Now, since the last decade of the XX century, women have quite strongly manifested their interest to participate in political decision-making. It was

verified that having elapsed half a century since women's political rights have been approved, they have merely co-decided who would run the government, but they didn't claim their right to be elected to the government.

However, back in the 70s the issue started to be discussed, as shown by Articles 7 and 4 of the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Thus, the convention considers discriminatory the exclusion of women from the political power, and under Article 4 it sets forth the need to adopt positive action measures. This important instrument establishes that the lack of discriminating intention is not enough, but that it is essential to check the results of the policies to determine whether they are inclusive of women or otherwise.

It has been contended that the persistence of discrimination against women in political participation is mainly evidenced in the sub-representation, and this has been a fundamental argument for the juridical establishment of the representation quotas for both genders, as well as for minimum quotas for women representation. Certainly, parity is argued directly from equality and democratic representation, but, as such, it has not yet been established in any of our countries, notwithstanding the existence of a number of proposals on this regard.

- *It concretizes the abstract notion of equality*

The feminism of equality has developed the idea considering the inequalities between genders.

*"Equality refers to a relationship, rather than to an identity. We understand equality as a relationship of similarity not of A with respect to B, but of A and B with respect to certain characteristics that are valuable to us as human beings (for example: autonomy, authority, rights) . The formula would be something like A and B are alike in C (or men and women are alike in what they have of valuable humanity). Equality necessarily presupposes the difference with respect to many other characteristics that we don't have or want or care at all (such as their warlike aggressiveness)."*⁴

However, from that same feminism, it is recognized that:

"Within the ideas left to us by the tradition of modernity and illustration, with which we inevitably come across both in the political and in the moral discourse, the idea of equality has proved to be the most difficult. Its limits

are vague, its presentation is always controversial, its political instrumentation too often causes practical absurdities. However, the idea of equality is the engine and the foundation of the current democratic societies.”¹⁵

Even with those difficulties, the Network against all forms of discriminations has showed that, in the Paraguayan case, the idea of equality has been defended since its birth as an independent country.

The Argentine philosopher María I. Santa Cruz specifies the concept of equality by pointing out that: *“Equality is equipotency, or the capacity to exercise power, not merely to resist, but to have the strength and resources required for autonomy (so necessary to us); equality is equivalence or “to have the same value in the sense of not being considered superior or inferior to anyone else “; equality is equiphony, that is “the possibility to emit a voice to be heard and considered as a bearer of meaning, enjoyment and credibility “¹⁶*

But it is non-discrimination that allows us to tackle the rupture of the principle of equality and, based on the main instruments of international law of human rights, Article 6 of the Bill submitted by the Network contends that discrimination is:

“Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, - under conditions of equality - of the rights, freedoms and guarantees recognized to all people, on the basis of race, color, descent, national or ethnic origin, language, religion, affiliation to a political party or movement, social origin, economic position, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, civil status, birth, affiliation, health condition, disability, appearance or any other social condition”.

In the event of a discriminatory event, the Network bill empowers the General Office of Human Rights to receive claims and open investigation summaries with regard to the discrimination facts coming from the private or public sector, with powers to impose administrative penalties in the summaries (Arts. 10 to 17).

It describes the crime of violation of equality among people when the defendant fails to restore the situation of equality before the law disregarding the measures imposed on him or her by an irrevocable judgment issued by the General Office of Human Rights, punished with up to two years





imprisonment or the payment of a fine, composition and publication of the judgment (Art. 18). It also describes the crime of incitement to discrimination, punished with up to one year imprisonment or the payment of a fine, composition and publication of the judgment (Art. 19).

Besides creating the mechanism for every person, it defines the discrimination carried out by a public officer as a serious offense, and is subject to the penalties of the relevant legislation (Art. 20); and defines the discrimination by a judge in the exercise of his duties as ground for indictment and removal, pursuant to the applicable legislation (Art. 21). It grants the discrimination victims the right to lodge actions for the protection of constitutional rights, without prejudice to other corresponding criminal and administrative actions (Arts. 22 y 23).

The Draft empowers the District Attorney to exercise all civil actions conducive to the cancellation of the legal capacity of any institution that intends to promote discrimination (Art. 24), and, lastly, it assigns to the Office of Public Defense the control and enforcement of antidiscriminatory laws (Art.25) and the reception and transmission of denunciations.

- It recovers the theoretical production in Paraguay

The process against all forms of discrimination started by recovering reflections, so far isolated, on specific forms of discrimination existing in the Paraguayan society. This has been especially relevant for two main reasons: 1) Universalities have not historically complied with the purpose of producing knowledge and theory to conceive the society and project the future. Publications have shown a significant number of works that were not extensively disseminated; and 2) This provided actions with a solid and critical foundation, and facilitated the interaction between the different sectors from an analytical level that enabled a dialogue that went beyond denunciations of specific discriminatory situations, creating a collective vision of rights to non-discrimination and breaking up with the historical practice of fighting only to overcome corporative problems.

Non-discrimination in the Latin American context

The concern and the search for mechanisms on non-discrimination takes place simultaneously in several countries of the region, though with different

leaderships, processes, proposals and outcomes. The Latin American feminism found in the –socially speaking- most unequal continent of the world, had tried to achieve de facto equality by means of laws establishing the obligatory nature of equality; national mechanisms addressing state efforts and equality plans.

All the Constitutions in the region have consecrated the principle of equality and the fundamental right to non-discrimination; yet few have that right regulated. In most of the cases, the non-discrimination mechanisms developed are limited to article(s) of the Criminal Code, as in the case of Costa Rica, Peru, Guatemala and Uruguay. It is worth mentioning the different emphasis made in Guatemala, for example, where it has been presented as a bill against discrimination to indigenous people by Rosalina Tuyuc and two members of the House of Representatives. The consecration arrived years after, and the bill supporters have expressed their disagreement with the inclusion of all forms of discrimination, as it dilutes the relevance of ethnic discrimination in the country, based on racist ideas and practices.

In Brazil, the work for non-discrimination is focused on the struggle against racism. This is quite interesting, as there are departments for women's equality and for racial equality created simultaneously. Both issues concern the Brazilian society and State, but the ways are different. While women's equality follows the trends of equality plans built participatively, the search for racial equality furthers several forms of egalitarian insertion, and racism is criminalized.

Chile and Paraguay are countries where bills against all forms of discrimination have currently been submitted to the Legislative Power. But, in any case, Argentina and México are the ones who have developed both an adequate juridical framework and the institutional mechanisms that allow the implementation of non-discrimination public policies. In the first case, the major promoter of the law and of the National Institute Against Discriminations (INADI) was Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni, a prominent criminologist and defender of human rights. Zaffaroni is currently a member of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation, and was INADI's first director. In Mexico, the movement was led by the Ambassador Rincón Gallardo, a physically disabled himself.

In Argentina there is presently a National Plan against Discrimination whose current director is María José Lubertino, a renowned feminist, who has put new energy to INADI's actions, turning the institution into a social referent for several discriminated sectors.

In short, there are only two countries that have been able to consecrate comprehensive public policies on non-discrimination, covering all other forms of discrimination for all concerned groups. In the remaining countries, the issue is limited to specific populations or to a rarely applied legislation. Uruguay's process demands a special insight, as its Equality Plan has been in force for just one year, and it contains a comprehensive non-discrimination proposal which will depend on the "materialization" in state policies, on how it is specifically used by the groups and people concerned and on how the cases are resolved by the Judicial Power.

Impact

Undoubtedly, the systematized process has inserted the issue of discriminations into the country's social and political agenda. And even more, this concern has also been included in the electoral campaign, where certain left wing minority parties express their opposition to all forms of discrimination in their political proposals.

However, it is possible that the power of the process itself has led the most fundamentalist sectors who reject all kinds of sexual autonomy, free sexual choice and multiplicity of gender identities to organize and ally directly with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and some evangelic churches against the struggle to accomplish mechanisms for attention to sexual abuse victims, development of sexual and reproductive health policies and, of course, against non-discrimination.

Broadening of the feminist horizon

The struggles for women's rights, equality and freedom, to actively participate in initiatives to create a citizenship that cares about society and goes beyond each group's specific claims and concerns represent the type of experience that broadens the feminist horizon.

The recognition by different groups of the feminist leaderships enables them to exercise a participatory, shared and generous leadership, giving space and importance to the various players who claim for a democratic political culture in a country with a long authoritarian tradition.

Lessons Learnt

- To start a broad process integrating the demands of all its members rather than merely those of conveners gave rise to the conformation of a solid network where its members know, share and defend the struggles of the others, because it is clear that discrimination is exercised in different manners, to different sectors and affects the whole society.
- The relationship with foreign people and organizations has helped to strengthen the local impact of the network.
- Knowledge-building and discussion on the several forms of discrimination brought along a solid base that helped us to understand the practices, the consequences of the discrimination issue and the reality around us.
- The commitment of people sensitized to discrimination issues has been key to the successful creation of the Network, moreover when this commitment transcends the people and settled in the institutions.
- Leaderships capable of collecting and integrating the concerns of all sectors are the ones that get to develop strong, medium and long term process.
- Access to computing technologies has facilitated the access to information and the participation of groups with special needs, such as the blind people ♦

1 With the contribution of Line Bareiro, General Coordinator of the Network against all forms of discrimination and member of the CMP and AFM.

2 Bryman, A., 1992. Charisma and Leadership in organizations. London: Sage

3 The Paraguayan Women's Coordinating Committee (CMP) is an organization composed of 10 feminist organizations of Asunción and Encarnación, who have carried out successful campaigns to accomplish a positive and inclusive change for women in the sphere of the national law.

4 "Cooperation Agreement among the Committee of Equity, Gender and Social Development of the Senate, the Social Equity and Gender Committee of the House of Representatives, the Committee of Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs of the House of Representatives, the Center of Documentation and Studies (CDE) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to support activities around the process for the Elaboration of a Bill against





Discrimination", in BAREIRO, Line (comp., 2005): "*Discriminación-es. Debate teórico paraguayo. Legislación antidiscriminatoria*". United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee of the Senate, Social Equity and Gender Committee of the House of Representatives, the Committee of Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs of the House of Representatives, the Center of Documentation and Studies (CDE). Asunción, p. 15 to 17. The short name for this agreement is: "Agreement for Non-Discrimination".

5 Rosa Posa, who also integrates the International Committee of Human Rights for Gays and Lesbians (IGLHRC), and in Paraguay is cited within the public spaces as a feminist and advocate of the rights of the GLTB.

6 In the words of Carolina Ravera, interview carried out for this material on October 16, 2007.

7 Paraguayan Women's Coordinating Committee (CMP). Implementation of the Beijing Platform in Paraguay, 1995-2000. Asunción, 2001, page 193.

8 Bareiro, Line (compiler): *Discriminaciones y medidas antidiscriminatorias. Debate teórico paraguayo y legislación comparada*, Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee, CDE and UNFPA. Asunción, 2003.

9 Bareiro, Line (compiler): *Discriminaciones. Debate Teórico Paraguayo. Legislación Antidiscriminatoria*. Honourable Senate – Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee; Honourable House of Representatives – Social Equity and Gender Committee, Honourable House of Representatives – Committee for Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs, Center of Documentation and Studies, United Nations Population fund, Asunción, 2005

10 Member of the Paraguayan Women's Coordinating Committee (CMP) and of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC).

11 The network is integrated by: Aireana, Amnesty International Paraguay, Asociación Afroparaguaya Kamba Cuá, CDE, CDIA, CLADEM Paraguay, CLIBCH, CMP, CODEHUPY, CONAPRODIS, DECIDAMOS, FADDAPY, Fundación Vencer, Fundación Yvy Marãe'?, Gag-It, Las Ramonas, Luna Nueva, Paragay, Tierra Viva, UNFPA, UNIFEM. Supported by: UN, B'nait Brith, Social Equity and Gender Committee, Honourable House of Representatives.

12 Sartori, Giovanni, "*La Igualdad*" in *Teoría de la Democracia 2: Los problemas clásicos*, Bs. As. 1991.

13 Mouffe, Chantal, "Democratic citizenship and political community", in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *La democracia de fin de siglo*, CDE, Asunción, 1991, page 19.

14 Molinas Petit, Cristina, *Notes to the personal vision of the difference feminism*, in http://www.creatividadfeminista.org/articulos/cristina_resp_a_sendon.htm

15 Pablo Iglesias Foundation, presentation of the book Valcárcel, Amelia (comp), "*El concepto de igualdad*", Madrid.

16 Santa Cruz, Marita, "Notes to the concept of equality" (*Isegoría* 6, 1192) Madrid.





Doing radio (for doing) politics

Margarita Humphreys O. August, 2007
Chile

This document is part of the systematization of various experiences that contribute to *"strengthen and broaden the feminist leadership experience, at the theoretical and political level, in order to influence the new Latin American context in view of the challenges, opportunities and limitations it presents, reconceptualizing the experiences and learnings of the feminist organizations"*¹.

This systematization intends to give a report on a *practice of communication* within a women's organization –such as La Morada–, as well as on the process involved in the establishment of an independent media station in the Chilean context. On the one hand, it represents an advance and democratization in social and Human Rights affairs, yet, on the other hand, evidences a clear identification of the forms of doing politics and the traditional models sustaining the power (most frequently linked to the economic power and its relationship with the communications system).

In the present national scenario, the media make up a complex system, constituted as an economic sector with the relevant modern characteristics: concentration, vertical integration, transnationalization and globalization. Therefore, the possibility of devising, establishing and maintaining a media station that question such a classic (or conservative) model is a permanent challenge that requires the stamina to be at least

willing to venture upon a political project of considerable scope but of hard accomplishment.

Radio Tierra is the name of this challenge which, from a Corporation of feminist origin, intends to articulate the civil society for it to exercise its right to communication by means of the production of a social guideline which is original, critical and sensitive to those issues with low representation in the mass media. Similarly, this guideline and production of contents favoring the promotion of a proactive citizenship is devised in permanent connection with others, i.e., with other networks, players and forms of management. The praxis of Radio Tierra could be defined as a production of contents from the civil society, permanently put into action for others, that is, politicized.

The context of this experience is formed both by the national political history and by the (also political) history of changes, advances and retreats of the Corporation to which it belongs.

In that sense, the current systematization of the Radio Tierra experience tries to give an account of the main moments which, though frequently entangled, get to represent the manner in which this Radio moved forward in a maturation and learning process, providing consistency to its central commitment.

Background and Contexts of Radio Tierra experience

To describe the practice carried out in Radio Tierra is to deal with the concept of praxis itself, wherein *what you do* defines *what you are*. Both dimensions –*to be* and *to do*– will be permanently revisited, since Radio Tierra is not defined from an external referent but rather from a practice that intends to dialogue with the different referential points in terms of communications and civil society.

In this line, the practice of *doing radio* from a women's organization spreads out at different levels. Mainly, this *doing radio* "is" Radio Tierra's actual political project, just as the diversification of the communications system, in order to make it more democratic, adding –and strengthening– new discursivities of the organized civil society.

This "opening" represents the broadening not only of the Radio's platform but also of the articulation with other organizations; both at national (Citizen Voices - *Voces de la Ciudadanía*), and regional-global level (AMARC, World Social Forum).

Finally, it's not that the Radio is (only) the means to impact on public policies, renew the social agenda or give the right to speak to those who are left out of the system. It is not merely the means to do this; it

is also its *aim*. The radio *is* the project; its name and registration constitute the place where this political practice can make sense. Then, the choice of *doing radio* does not respond to a contingency, but to take charge of one of the issues that created more stress in the country (the communications issue, the connection with the power and the media-related regulations), while *taking* one of the platforms with highest impact on the people.

In reflecting on this experience we need to describe the contexts where it comes from and where it settles. There are two levels identified in this document: the immediate context - La Morada Corporation, and the national context - the media in Chile today.

Immediate context: La Morada Corporation for Women's Development

La Morada was born in 1983 as an articulating space of the feminist movement and the democratic civil society. The Corporation comes to life as a result of the process originated in Casa La Morada, a centre for the analysis and dissemination of Women's condition, in the middle of the dictatorship, conceived as the first autonomous space for reflection and attention around gender violence. In 1991, La Morada directed its first management experience of a media station with social guideline, free and independent, through the concession of a radio frequency.

In this story, La Morada Corporation stands out for joining the democratic transition and consolidation of the country by means of actions for women's autonomy and exercise of citizenship. In those times, Radio Tierra was devised as a way of opening spaces to women's cultural and social political practices and discourses which, in the struggle of recovering democracy, developed a gender, cultural, political thought unseen in the

country. Broadcasting of issues with scarce representation, or naturalized in the social agenda - as well as the visibility of sub-represented concerns - to the citizenship from a radio devised, conducted and broadcasted by a feminist organization, was one of the first components of the Radio's communicational profile and identity.

Since its origins, Radio Tierra assumed the communication "from" the women, a policy that was not limited to dealing with "women's issues". This was a communication exercise which, from a women's association, was capable of interacting with the *Main Stream*, contributing rather dynamically to a discussion which seemed frozen, stereotyped and neutralized at times. "*Radio Tierra lived the 90s in a discursive vanguard, frankly speaking. Yes, a language front line, to name and listen things situated in the thin and subtle line dividing the public from the private. It spoke about*

Chilean economy in the early nineties, according to neoliberal parameters"² Thus, Radio Tierra developed social contents from a women's association, but also dealt with the stagnation suffered by the *woman sign* within a society such as the Chilean. Radio Tierra challenges this traditional space and the rationale with which the feminine is differently supported.

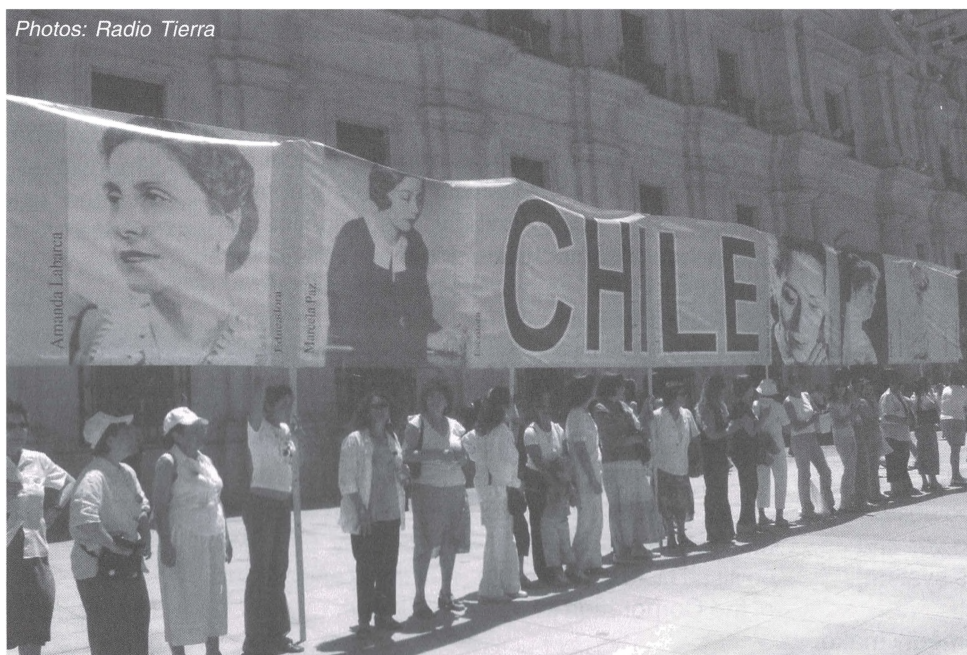
At present, La Morada is an open cultural and political space, a place where the members of the organized civil society meet and intersect (www.lamorada.cl), a licensee of Radio Tierra 1300 AM (www.radiotierra.cl), a radio station with an independent and autonomous editorial of 13 hours daily broadcasting. La Morada offers a center specialized in attention to violence victims, and has produced several actions and investigations on issues of political participation, violence, gender justice, health, culture, communications and human rights. Finally, as a Corporation, it works for the strengthening of the organized civil society, and it is one of the most active organizations in the promotion of the World Social Forum (WSF) process in Chile.

The main objectives by which the Corporation practice is guided are the following:

- To help modify the gender relationship by means of communicational, cultural and political actions geared to constructing and enhancing the capacities, autonomy and exercise of women's citizenship.
- To contribute -at the local, national and global levels- to broaden, deepen and consolidate an inclusive democratic culture, respectful of the differences and

founded on the people's action and participation.

In this context, the Radio Tierra project appears as one of the Corporation's work axes, focused on *the democratization of information as a premise for the democratization of society*. From the outset, this project tensions the



Photos: Radio Tierra

women's bodies and their autonomy over it, of physical and symbolic violence, of men and women's sexuality, of the urban subjectivity (...) but most of all, it spoke about naming the memory, the Human Rights, the place of the victims -firstly honored and then forgotten among so many macro successful numbers, in the jet-like takeoff of the

classical notion of “communication”, as it transfers the discussion to the field of communications in terms of the context of democratic development. Therefore, the experience of Radio Tierra will be portrayed, “managed from the fundamental premise that communication is a right”.

At the descriptive level, Radio Tierra is currently characterized by:

- Daily broadcasting through 1300 AM and online via www.radiotierra.cl
- An editorial with communitarian and social mark, centered in diversity and independence legitimization.
- Citizenship building: direct participation of social organizations that produce and conduct radio spaces.
- Communicational practice to socially establish the right to information and communication.
- Social actions for new communication and information technologies (TICs): Multimedia Communication Centre - CCM – and www.radiotierra.cl platform.
- Networking with AMARC Chile and Latin America and the Caribbean, World Association of Communitarian Radio Stations.
- Training in public journalism to volunteer students.
- Production of citizen and public welfare campaigns.

As an independent communication media station owned by a women’s organization, Radio Tierra has worked throughout its life in several projects, establishing lines of action to be geared towards reinforcing a media station capable of convening different social players, thus becoming a key referent of the tensions existing between citizenship, democratization and information, plurality and associativity as a new form of management, capable of challenging the current hegemonic model of power circulation and information control.

In this context, Radio Tierra political project emerges as one of the greatest challenges of La Morada Corporation for Women’s Development; a place that has become the great platform wherefrom *doing radio* is boosted, devised and held. As a women’s association, La Morada turns into a place where to manage and consolidate – though with some tensions – this communicational project.

To underscore such an experience as Radio Tierra, we need to incorporate the history through which the practices developed from the organized civil society – under the form of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – have carried out new logics resistant to the prevailing ones, as well as tensions it had confronted related to the proposal of a new *paradigm* or model to be managed as a different space. From the outset, La Morada and Radio Tierra – its communicational project- were



sustained and promoted by the International Cooperation development projects; the International Cooperation not only provided financing support but also a frame of reference where the NGO’s practices were validated and emanated as a different referent for the social society.

Currently, NGOs in Chile have felt the need to reconsider the ways for sustaining their projects and practices, in view of –among other things- the gradual disengagement of the International Cooperation agencies. For La Morada, Radio Tierra experience represents a possibility of testing a new management modality, principally based on the rationale of associativity, self-management and innovative sustainability models. In this regard, political development, taken as the democratic development and the relevant governance, extends the validity of Development Cooperation lines. Our diagnosis is based on the fact that communications are essential for democratic development, and therefore the “communication for development” axis is a fundamental line to be integrated to the Cooperation policies.

With the feasibility risks associated to the new management modalities and the sustainability of the political project and of the economy, the relationship created between Radio Tierra and the Corporation to which it belongs is not a trouble-free matter. In an Organization such as La Morada, where different lines of action are followed to achieve the objectives proposed, the coexistence of different practices (that drag or imply diverse logics) makes it necessary to permanently monitor the coherence existing not only between them but also in the way each of them are oriented in terms of the corporation general approaches. The matter is so complex because each of the practices is potentially capable of challenging the main objectives, approaches or referents of the Corporation, as

practice always entails the possibility of reviewing origins, in a dialectical relationship. On the other hand, certain tensions existing between Radio Tierra and La Morada have to do with the organizational logics, both at the administrative and the content level. On one level, the question is how a non-profit organization administers a me-

Radio station, given the business model logic of the latter. On the other, it is connected with a certain historical tension of a “feminist communication” *versus* an “independent communication”. It is worth mentioning that this tension has not represented an irreducible difference, a scenario which often hampers the progress of organizations in pursuit of their objectives. Radio Tierra has taken feminism as a critical referent from where diversity is possible; hence, it is characterized by convoking a plurality of voices with scarce representation in the public space.

The media in Chile today

From its inception, the first impact of Radio Tierra was to open and establish a new social listening within “*a society marked with censorship, repression and lack of social participation as a consequence of 17 years of dictatorship*”⁸.

The Radio’s experience starts in a context in which the first reference is the censorship and repression characteristic of the military dictatorship; this provides sense to a practice such as Radio Tierra, that confirms certain shortcomings in the democratic transition process in the sense of fully guaranteeing the freedom of expression, a recommendation made at that time from message issuers. Progresses in this regard seemed to be “*restricted to the derogation of a set of administrative measures, such as the elimination of the practice of previous censorship*”⁹, the result of corporate pressures (Chile’s School of Journalism) and, to a lesser extent, of pressures from media owners.

Though the first progresses are extremely relevant, they don’t seem to be enough in the light of citizen expectation for the guarantee of freedom of expression, nor do they constitute a new policy capable of sustaining a significant modification of the media as a platform for organized citizenship expression. In other words, they don’t advance towards more proactive proposals, such as the right to communications, whose subject is the people. It is worth mentioning the diagnosis made by the Radio as regards to the context: “*... the Concertation governments’ communications policy*

has been based on the philosophy that ‘the best policy is to have no policy’. This has left the field of communications opened to market agents with insufficient regulatory mechanisms. One of the effects of the non-intervention policy has been the disappearance of various media stations emerged in the last years of the military regime, with the resulting negative impact on pluralism.”¹⁵

In the case of our country, the fact that the communications field be “regulated” by the market agent brings significant consequences: the economic processes are accompanied by an “*ideological monopoly*”¹⁶. The dominant presence of these groups and the prevailing ideology monopolizing most of the communicational programming (both in written media and others) relegate and marginalize cultural diversity, the presence of other citizenship emerging issues, as well as the possibility of political diversity. In the Chilean case, the lack of diversity constitutes one of the reasons for the ideological hegemonization underlying the business sector, founded on conservatism and trained in a neo-liberal economic matrix. In this context, the plurality and diversity possible for the field of communications represent mere exceptions to the general tendency. *The media scenario in the nineties in Chile showed a high level of property concentration, homogenization of media guidelines and the related consequences on freedom of expression and the right to information which prevail until today. One of the main current needs for the full development of democracy is the presence of media independent from the ideological influence of the main powers: business managers, religious creeds, moral conservatism, as well as political parties and the state apparatus.*”¹⁷

In this national context, the consolidation of an experience such as Radio Tierra advances in the development of a right to communications, as it gives back to citizens the possibility of speaking through the media, while providing them with visibility and opinion, restoring the value of democracy and diversity where different opinions on the world are valued and respected. These would be the “values” leading the spirit of the establishment of Radio Tierra from a feminist organization that has become an outstanding

referent to analyze and discuss social issues. The way in which the feminist organization restores and sets out issues in the social agenda through the practice of independent communications constitutes a project where such issues may not only be heard but also developed in a different manner. The Radio progressively consolidated its editorial line in an unprecedented manner, as it stems from the actual voices of the people. The construction of an independent and communitarian editorial line will become the great axis that is in keeping with one of its main objectives: to diversify communication for democratizing the society. In fact, Radio Tierra has worked the passage existing from the “freedom of expression” to the “right to communication”, as it entails not only the right to express yourself (through the media) but also the power to demand the exercise of the right to communication. This requires putting the individual *in the center*; it will be him/her (the people themselves) who will be doing the radio, an active subjectivity in the production of his/her own contents. Let me underline this: it is through this exercise that democracy is constructed. Democratizing information to democratize society requires the diversification of the media. Hence, it is necessary to modify the relationship between the people and the media, to construct a society that empowers them by denaturalizing the classical conception of a passive society, unconcerned with the agreements of the large media consortia.

The manner in which this experience has approached the issue of democracy, in the new post-democratic transition scenario, includes not only the visibility of certain “issues” not attended by the public discourse, but also the way in which those issues are “produced” (by means of an editorial line), as well as the tools devised to make this project politically and economically sustainable. In such a context, the characteristic of Radio Tierra experience is to permanently underline the significance of a moment that greatly affected our country’s subjectivity, as well as its possibilities. In the light of the logic of forgetting, involving the whitening and hegemonization of a discourse that boast about overcoming, the plural, marginal and intermittent discourses demand *to go into the air* to recover a new subjectivity of the national sheltered in its symbolic potential.

This central political will is unfolded throughout a tradition by which it is consolidated as a referent of the independent communications practice in a women's group. This is the place where the experience of an editorial construction of plural languages materializes.

The history of an experience

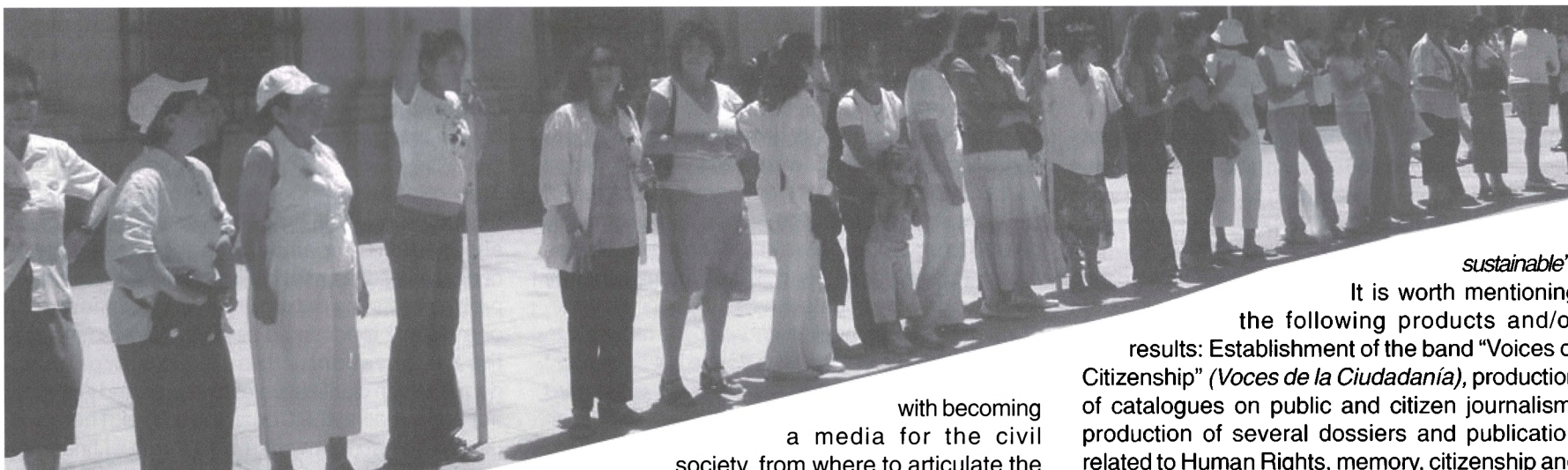
Radio Tierra was born in 1991 as a means to open spaces to women's cultural, social and political practices and discourses. This "incipient" and domestic experience of doing communications from a feminist organization will consolidate progressively through the systematization and learning of their own *métier* by coining predominant axes, proposing new forms of management and self-management, and adopting a critical stance as to the way of *doing* communications, aimed at strengthening the civil society and to impact on public policy.

Although Radio Tierra has 16 years of existence, the current systematization takes the period that goes from 1998 to 2007, for two main reasons. The first is connected to the fact that it is a period in which certain forms of action and management are consolidated and certain political lineaments related to the Corporation and the communications field in Chile are strengthened. The second reason is mainly geared to unveiling the way in which the Radio has been able to face the political and economic sustainability, by maintaining an independent media station which entails a certain determination to venture into a complex arena where the power and its representatives *traffic* the contents to hamper the survival of any alternative or criticism of such hegemony. The originality or peculiarity of Radio Tierra's experience comes from the fact of having a women's organization *venturing* upon the management of a media station, stressing the "ideological" factor and threatening the exclusivity of the *women sign*, advancing towards a feminism as a proposing and critical stance of the emergence of new subjectivities: a new civil society.

How can we maintain the Radio experience in this double juncture: the accumulation of media by the market agent and the lack of a methodological and economic frame provided by the International Cooperation Agencies?

This question cannot be subordinated to the experience of the Corporation itself in terms of the absence of Cooperation, as it is necessary to conceive the Radio in the light of the current linking problem existing between politics and the media, or a deeply mediatized politics. This means that the historization of the Radio's experience demands the clarification of referents and junctures not duplicated at the Corporation level. Therefore, the Radio had to invent mixed forms of financing (such as leasing radio slots) to keep moving towards the construction of an editoriaity that will turn into the political project of an independent media station to within a women's organization. On the other hand, and given the social junctures where the NGOs are immersed, Radio Tierra advances towards the construction of new political





action referents, while it joins the debate on the way to revive a politics with worn-out and frozen premises. Hence, Radio Tierra establishes bonds locally and globally, that will help it to consolidate a Radio practice deeply connected to the social development of communitarian management.

In 1998, Radio Tierra settles part of its political action through the awarding of the project: *"A mass media at the service of democracy consolidation and development"* (*Un medio Masivo al servicio del Desarrollo y la consolidación de la democracia*), the main purpose of which was to contribute - by means of the support to a radio with a proven plural and participatory tradition - to the public presence of a number of issues overlooked by the standards of the mass media related to human rights, life quality and democracy.

From the beginning, Radio Tierra experience settles as a social referent: a radio *for* the people and *of* the people. In this regard, the basis for future relationships with other social organizations are established, which have no access to public information and expression by means of the mass media.

With this process for strengthening the bonds of Radio Tierra with its direct beneficiaries, such as social organizations, there are steps taken which are not exclusively connected to project adjudication. At the same time, the Radio constructs a way of consolidating that is connected

with becoming a media for the civil society, from where to articulate the production of a social guideline while keeping its daily radio programming slot.

In 2002, Radio Tierra systematized and materialized one of its main purposes: to democratize information for democratizing society, through the assignment of the project: "Independent media for people and democracy in Chile". This project was aimed at promoting cultural and political pluralism through the enhancement of communicational impact capacity, generation of public opinion with a positive valorization of democracy and dissemination of civil society organization, report and monitoring of practices that violate freedom of expression through viable and independent media with political visibility.

The main results of this project have to do with the establishment of an editorial policy and line, the strengthening of bonds with other organizations and the opening to other public spheres and its relationship with communications situation in our country, such as Communitarian Radios. This program includes *"a multiple intervention strategy, with steps in the field of programming and publishing, technological update, setting up of independent media networks, strengthening of social organizations through the participation in the media, public welfare campaigns addressed at creating social awareness for freedom of expression defense, valorization of democracy and furtherance of associativity, commercialization strategies and development to make the program*

*sustainable*⁸
It is worth mentioning the following products and/or results: Establishment of the band "Voices of Citizenship" (*Voces de la Ciudadanía*), production of catalogues on public and citizen journalism, production of several dossiers and publication related to Human Rights, memory, citizenship and justice, elaboration and production of micro programs about the reality of household workers, their organizations and insertion in the media, copies of programs to be broadcasted nationwide on communitarian radios.

Political editorial line: Voices of Citizenship

A consequence of Radio Tierra's background, accompanied by the contribution of the aforementioned project, the band "Voices of Citizenship" settles as a fundamental axis of the practice. This radio program space gathers people, organizations, groups and networks with the intention of promoting exigibility and exercise of communicational rights. The thematic axes are: gender equality, freedom of expression, sexual minorities, ethnic identities, political, civil, social, economic and cultural human rights; environment and urban life quality.

This band will provide continuity to the Radio Tierra political project, where networking with other organizations is forged. *"Networking with Communitarian radios performed in 2004 opened new possibilities for the dynamic construction of communitarian editoriaity, the use of technical support, and especially the Internet broadcasting of RADIO TIERRA, and reinforced the exchange potential of the network in Chile and Latin America.*

Similarly, deepening and monitoring the women-politics relationship and its related representations – a historical editorial characteristic of RADIO TIERRA, facilitated the circulation of these discourses and their update, and to propose them to dynamize the editorialities of communitarian radio media⁹

In this regard, the Radio Tierra's new editorial line follows the trend of the social movements that denounce and handle the increasing problem of citizen participation. This manner of *doing Radio* has been proposed as a way to expand the logic of articulation and networking, in order to facilitate the existence of a new discourse independent from the predominant format.

On the other hand, this political stake reflected in the *Voices of Citizenship* tackles a context issue. It deals with crisis in terms of social participation, and, concurrently, with the situation of the communications debate in the democratic post-transition mark characteristic of Chile today. This debate seems to have frozen and neutralized. *"The communicational agenda of the two thousands is mostly labeled by market interests. The processes of radio and TV digitalization, the emergence and massification of new information technologies and communications, and the profile of the information society face the supremacy of the business/private sector, with insufficient public policies, with restrictive legislative and regulatory frameworks and with the absence of a third communications sector"*¹⁰

The stake for rearticulating the public through the *Voices of Citizenship* falls within "a context of very fast transformation of public spaces, of voidance of the classic notions on social places and the emergence of new articulations for these spaces and places. The initiative simultaneously expects to make up an independent social public opinion and to promote organizations' communicational self-management".¹¹

This editorial project will progressively consolidate Radio Tierra as a community-oriented radio, while it integrates to this new way of doing "alternative" politics through the consolidation of bonds and networks operating both at the local and global level. This new form constitutes a new key to *doing radio for doing politics*.

New relationships: Doing radio (for doing) politics

The existence of a logic more in keeping with associativism and generation of networks will identify the last years of Radio Tierra experience. This strong inclination towards association and networks is basically related to the valuation of social processes, rather than to the proceeds expected. Process valuation in the new way of doing politics represents a true option in the light of a politics oriented with regard to "exact" questions and statistics.

Throughout its existence, Radio Tierra productivizes new bonds both at global and local level, by articulating to new spaces that work for the construction of new modes of political action, such as the experience of the World Social Forum (WSF) and the World Association for Community Radios of Latin America and the Caribbean (AMARC ALC). *"The political leadership accomplished by AMARC ALC operates in feedback to the radio practice"*¹²

These relationships are part of La Morada's corporate effort to provide continuity to its mission, which privileges *"active intervention for propositive intervention around the exercise of citizenship, the struggle for women's rights, the use of new communication and information technologies, community and citizen communication with means of the civil society itself, the articulation and formation of networks of social organizations"*¹³ from the perspective of social transformation, network generation and associative practice area some of the alternatives for conceiving social changes. On the other hand, a networked politics has to do with the concept of the current social subject. So to speak, there is a citizen globalization that may not be disregarded at the time of devising social transformation. In this line, the connection to spaces such as the WSF represents an opportunity to think another way to "do politics" and, from there, to devise social change – basically because the Forum is not an organization but rather a cultural and political space in transformation. Hence, *"absolute social change cannot be done in one single direction;*

*changes always involve a number of possibilities, and I think that that is something you can find in networks and world associativity, as networks also provide something fundamental: the understanding that there are no hierarchies. Anybody may relate to the Network; everyday life holds pyramidal elements, the Network does not"*¹⁴

At the local level, La Morada and Radio Tierra have furthered women and citizen participation in networks, meetings, forums, platforms and seminars (also extending globally). An example of this networked practice was the participation in the Chilean Social Forum (FSCH), in the year 2004, where over 200 organizations met in an open and democratic space to discuss the country's concerns. La Morada was one of the organizers of the FSCH, which represented a change in the country's political scenario, in what may be considered as *"a revival of the social movement, evidencing that the discontent in the light of uneven economic growth, the lack of political participation, the skepticism in terms of democracy may be reverted in a new social agenda."*¹⁵

Participation of La Morada and Radio Tierra in the FSCH communication committee contributed to the development of a successful communicational strategy. On the other hand, in this networked cooperation, Radio Tierra carried out a complete coverage with daily broadcasts from the studios and live from the Forum-space. *"Broadcasts showed the main discussions, debates, mobilizations and articulations having place in these global citizenship events. The formats used were several: reports, interviews, discussion tables, broadcasts, all using platforms that offer the new technologies, the Internet"*¹⁶

In the international level, La Morada/ Radio Tierra actively participate in the WSF by means of the membership of international Networks. The proximity to global debates has been favored by the presence and political leadership of the Vice President of AMARC ALC who is, in turn, the President of La Morada, as a member of the Forum's International Committee. From the beginning of the Forum, Radio Tierra has attended and participated in its activities in the different editions; in WSF III held in Porto Alegre; in the

thematic forum on migrations in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia; in WSF IV in Mumbai, India; in the Americas Social Forum in Quito; in the Chilean Social Forum, 2004 and 2006 editions; in WSF V in Porto Alegre, Brazil; in the Mediterranean Social Forum; in the Polycentric WSF VI in Caracas, Venezuela; and in the last WSF in Nairobi, Kenya.

This participation opens the possibility to update the debates on citizenship and the forms of advocacy, adding to the discussion new questions on political exercise possibilities. *"The place occupied by community broadcasting in these processes to articulate and facilitate them is a key element that constructs and broadens their democratic hallmark."*¹⁷. As an example of the relevance of these relationships, it is worth mentioning the local impact achieved by La Morada and Radio Tierra in terms of reinforcing the presidential campaign of the current President, Ms. Michelle Bachelet. This means that La Morada /Radio Tierra felt it was important to underline the value of having a woman occupy the position of President in Chile.

*There was an outstanding juncture going on in Chile in 2005¹⁸, and we felt persuaded to participate in order to tip the processes and obtain a democracy of a better quality and density -as the alternation in power also involves the gender factor- and to influence this alternation taking into account the symbolic marks at stake in Chile"*¹⁹. This involves local advocacy as well as global relationships that serve to update debates on citizenship, ways of doing politics and renewal of a democracy that is progressively losing consistency in its macroeconomic numbers.

The connection between Radio Tierra and the World Social Forum represents a significant learning in the new forms of social articulation. The experience of such connection constitutes a process and a new debate of the way of doing politics, attracting citizenship and dynamizing its processes. It also involves a significant learning of the way of doing communications, when the Forum itself emerges as a horizontal platform that challenges the classic forms of articulation and management among organizations that make up society. In the Chilean case, the 2004 and 2006 editions of the FSCH represent a new scenario that poses challenges

and potentialities in the continuity of a project such as Radio Tierra. *"Its methodology of action in terms of practices and expansion – in contrast with the diverse – relocates and refreshes"*²⁰ debates on the sustainability of communitarian communicational practices, because, ultimately, the Forum has to do with the construction of a political space that is not limited to political parties.

The connection of Radio Tierra with these new forms of participation, such as the FSCH experience, is not restricted to broadcasting and covering those meetings; rather, it puts in action a practice that contributes to *"open the rule and break the information barrier of the large media"*²¹, to the extent that it carries out the follow up and the communicational translation process of one of the main current process related to the construction of a global citizenship. The associative will and the use of new technologies for its completion will turn into a characteristic of Radio Tierra project as a participation policy.

In this frame, and with the situations inherent to the debate on communications in the construction of the possibility of Another World, to open the elites that exercise politics it is necessary to have wills ready to venture with the introduction of a dynamism into democracy, and to unveil its failure as unique project. Eventually, we need to *"support the discussion on the necessary reforms to the ways of doing politics and to favor the action of citizens so as to neutralize the power of business elites"*²²

The labor of *constructing a citizenship* through the *construction of a way of communication* that challenges hegemony in the field of communications affirms the possibility of raising the social movement discourses, helping to strengthen their political authorship and providing advocacy tools for the construction of a more consistent democracy.

In short, Radio Tierra is based on a logic of production of contents that not only articulates local voices and spaces but also covers global spaces, where the new way of doing politics is conceived and discussed. The most apparent learning is related to the connection, at the local level, with different "voices of citizenship" (organizations, groups) that produces the transforming effect of Radio Tierra as a radio opened to the people. This transformation comes

together with an internal discussion of the ways to operationalize a new concept of civil society, a new statute for citizenship, which no longer resides exclusively on the NGO. The accomplishment of this premise leads to the construction of an editorship where various organizations produce their contents and put them on the air from the Radio platforms. Thus, the concept of citizenship is strained and challenged by *"resisting to this devaluation of the democratic system, that is linked with the crisis of party politics, mostly perceived by the discourse circulating in the media as useless, failed and corrupt."*²³ Citizenship is seen not only as the audience, but also as *social territory*²⁴ ♦

1 General Purpose, in "Los aportes feministas en el nuevo contexto Latinoamericano" KIC Project from OXFAM / NOVIB. Lima, March 2007

2 Perla Wilson: *Radio Tierra 14 years*. Santiago, 2005. Page 1. My italics.

3 "Formulación del Proyecto Medios de Comunicación Independientes para la Ciudadanía y la Democracia en Chile". 2001 Page 20.

4 "El contexto mediático en el Chile de Hoy". Document for the Board of Directors. La Morada 2001. Page 1

5 Opus Cit. Page 1

6 Opus Cit. Page 1

7 Opus Cit. Page 3

8 Opus Cit. Page 2.

9 "Comunicación y Democracia" Radio Tierra Developments for 2005. Page 1.

10 Perla Wilson: *Chile: "Democracia al debito en las comunicaciones. Radio Tierra y su marca social"*. May, 2006.

11 Opus Cit.

12 Perla Wilson: *Chile: "Democracia al debito en las comunicaciones. Radio Tierra y su marca social"*. May, 2006.

13 La Morada Annual Report, 2004. Page 8

14 Interview Pía Matta.

15 La Morada Annual Report, 2004. Page 8

16 *Radio Tierra in Santiago de Chile: "Una experiencia de ampliación de la democracia a través de las comunicaciones"*. 2005 - Page 2

17 La Morada Annual Report, 2005. Pág. 11

18 We refer to the support to the electoral campaign of the current President of the Republic, Michelle Bachelet, from a place other than that of the political parties involved, and as a fresh referent who would not be identified or confused with the electoral campaign management sustained by the Concertation parties.

19 La Morada Annual Report, 2005. Pág. 11

20 "Comunicación y Democracia" - Radio Tierra Developments for 2005. Page 1

21 *Radio Tierra in Santiago de Chile: "Una experiencia de ampliación de la democracia a través de las comunicaciones"*. 2005 Page 2

22 M. Pía Matta and Pera Wilson: "Género y Comunicación Política: Presidenciales" - Chile 2005. February, 2006

23 Opus Cit.

24 Opus Cit.



Method of Organization and Political Action

Brazilian Women's Articulation

Carmen Silva
Brazil

Can we find in the AMB's way of operation and performance elements that constitute its own method for self organization and political action? The answer to this question is the challenge we undertake in elaborating this systematization, which is part of the Brazilian preparation for the continental meeting of the AFM - *Articulación Feminista Marcosur*.





Brief record of the AMB

“What could be the purpose of our existence?”

“The AMB (Brazilian Women’s Articulation, by its acronym in Portuguese) is a political non-party organization, born from the organization effort of the Brazilian women’s movement during the preparation process of the IV United Nations World Conference about “Women, Development and Peace”, held in Beijing, China, in 1995”. Its principles include the respect for political and organizational autonomy of its constituent organizational spaces. These spaces, organized in each state, are called networks, forums, groups or articulations. From now on we will use the term ‘forum’ in making reference to all of them, in order to facilitate comprehension.

At present, the AMB is organized through the National Meeting, that gathers activists from all feminist spaces who support the AMB and are willing to participate; the National Political Committee, which is equivalent to the national board of other movements, where the representatives of the State Women’s Forums meet with the National Executive Coordination and where networks, movements and related articulations are also seated. The coordination is entrusted to eight coordinators articulated from the regions of the country, and another five distributed as follows: the representative of the AMB at the *Articulación Feminista Marcosur*, representatives at the National Board for Women’s Rights (*Consejo Nacional de los Derechos de la Mujer*), and three members of the National Executive Secretariat. The Secretariat is currently undertaken on a collegiate basis by two feminist organizations, *SOS CORPO*, Feminist Institute for Democracy from Pernambuco and the *Leila Diniz, Research and Investigations Group*, from Rio Grande do Norte.

The AMB after Beijing

At a new national meeting held in returning from the Beijing Conference, the coordination believed it was proper to terminate the AMB's activities, as this articulation had met its purpose, while most of the attendants were in favor of the continuance of the AMB. This was the first decision, and it was immediately agreed that the AMB would be focused on monitoring the Beijing Platform in Brazil.

In the nineties, the idea of monitoring the platforms arising from the Conferences of the United Nation's social cycle was strong in Brazil. Some believed that it involved controlling the steps leading to materialize the UN deliberations in the country; others felt that it would be necessary to follow an intense mobilization process to compel the Brazilian State to execute the public policies and rights required in order to enforce the Beijing platform. The notion of monitoring public policies, which becomes so strong in the NGOs and social movements in the nineties, has the antecedent of the UN social cycle, the World Bank policies for structural adjustment and the advent of neoliberalism that restricts the State's action in the social area. In Brazil we did and do live the contradictions of having a Citizen Constitution together with the laws that provide for several rights and the reduction of the State and the policies that would be necessary to enforce such rights.

"The strategy came up automatically, first it was Vienna (Human Rights Conference), then Cairo (Conference on Population and Development), and now Beijing... a guideline for public policies to be monitored was an accomplished fact, though they were actually there to be conquered. At that time, there was a significant discussion around the concept of "active" monitoring, not only of supervision but rather of fight for the implementation, a critical sense... but the concept is complicated, it restrains, restricts and ends with a more passive meaning".

The last years of the nineties were difficult to articulate for the AMB. There were some national meetings and debates around feminist guidelines in public policies, but there is no relevant participation and mobilization of the State Forums; some of them weakened, meeting sporadically on the occasion of Women's Day activities, others building their local struggles and organizing autonomously. There were AMB feminists working in the CNDM and in international spaces of the movement, where different elaborations on rights and policies for women were prepared. This period of low articulation capacity represented a kind of crisis to the AMB, which was overcome gradually from 2000.

"The AMB promoted a national evaluation of federal public policies in 2000, and, in the frame of the feminist struggle for qualifying the debate on democracy in Brazil, it included in its priorities the fight against racism, establishing a special relationship with the black women's movement, among the alliances with other movements. The AMB became involved in the process for preparing the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination,

Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (UN, Durban, 2001), increasingly visibilizing its commitment and identity with the feminist anti-racist struggle. In this moment, the process of articulation strengthening is marked by a meeting in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, called with the intention of reconsidering the AMB, from the idea of revitalizing the articulation in the states and resuming the discussion on public policies with the Brazilian government.

A new strategy

Amid the crisis of the articulation, a national meeting of the AMB primarily convened to organize the dialogue with the Brazilian State -in the times of Fernando Henrique Cardoso- in terms of monitoring the Beijing Platform and the demand for public policies represented a change in the history. The AMB decides to articulate a major alliance of the entire feminist movement and the women's movement, in order to build a Brazilian women's platform as a basis to autonomously address the government and the society in defense of our rights.

A new strategy was born to re-articulate the forces of the feminist movement, also giving birth to a new type of mobilization that led to the National Conference of Brazilian Women, which drafted the Feminist Political Platform - a reference of the political project currently used by the AMB. The procedure adopted was the same: broad national meetings were articulated, with representations of all the states and of all women's movements and articulations willing to participate; a charter of principles and a basic rule were drafted to support the process of debates throughout the country; and state conferences were held in 25 of the 26 states of the federation and in the Federal District, with a total of 5,212 women, many of which participate in local groups. The national conference was attended by 1,395 people chosen at the state conferences. Besides the AMB, the national organizing committee was formed by nine national articulations of the women's movement . This Conference, autonomously organized by the movement without government participation, is a relevant milestone in the history of feminism in the country.

From 2000, the AMB is also engaged in the process of the World Social Forum in tune with the *Articulación Feminista Marcosur*, with which it organizes a set of debates, and also with the Feminist Dialogues, an instance where different expressions of feminism at the global level are articulated prior to the World Social Forum events. Initially, the articulation took place with the “Planeta Fêmea”, a space for feminist debate and gathering to within the WSF and then, keeping certain own spaces, the AMB developed different activities together with other social movements, in the different battlefronts it undertakes. It is worth mentioning the demonstration in favor of abortion carried out at the WSF -where Planeta Femea took place- with broad adherence by the participants of the Social Forum .

The Brazilian situation in this period is marked by the election in 2002 of President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, who as candidate of the Brazilian Labor Party (PT) and of an alliance of parties of wide political spectrum, is also a political expression of power in the field of social movements appearing after the re-democratization period. The President establishes a new way of relation with social movements, opening new channels of participation and dialogue around public policies. Yet, he maintains the same type of economic policy in terms of State reforms inspired in the neoliberal policy.

Lula's government creates the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women, with ministerial status, and establishes the I National Conference on Policies for Women in 2004, a mechanism similar to those existing in other public policy areas such as health, rights of children and adolescents, etc., with participation of government bodies and civil society organizations. In a meeting with other national organizations of the women's movement, the AMB drafts a strategy to act in this process which influences the mobilization and opinion formation, in partnership with the delegates to be elected in the states, and the strategies for action in the national organizing committee.

At this point, the AMB takes reference on the Feminist Political Platform and publishes the magazine "Articulating the Feminist Struggle in Public Policies" where it sets out the differences between this Conference and the other, organized autonomously by the movement, and proposes the National Conference to establish Political Guidelines for Women. A similar situation happened in 2007, in the process of the II National Conference on Policies for Women.



Diversity of struggles

Concurrently with the above, the AMB keeps furthering the State Women's Forums in struggles in the local field, and articulating some feminist guidelines in the national sphere. This period is marked by the opposition to violence against women, the struggle for abortion decriminalization, the critical participation in the social security reform, the influence on the federal public budget and the preparation of the Pluri-Annual Plan (PPA) of the federal government, the participation in the national debate on the model of development and free trade, besides the active participation in Conferences on Public Policies for Promoting Racial Equality, and in the Human Rights Conference .

The AMB is broadening its articulated presence in the processes of the World Social Forum, both in the instances of development of the WSF, North-eastern Social Forum, the Pan-Amazonian Forum, the Hemispheric Forum and the Brazilian Social Forum, and in the organizing committees of all these events. In these spaces, it presents its guidelines in articulation with other movements, such as the sequence of activities called "Abortion in the democratic agenda", or the set of debates on the democratization of democracy which greatly contributed to the elaboration of a proposal for reforming the Brazilian political system, just to name two examples. This by no means implies that the participation takes place in a united and organized manner, or with strong participation of women's forums; on the contrary, the evaluations made by the coordination underscore the need to invest efforts to articulate the presence in international spaces; this led to the creation of a Working Group in "global struggles" to face this challenge.



This self-construction process of the Brazilian Women's Articulation - a feminist and anti-racist articulation - as a political subject of reference in the field of Brazilian social movements, capable of interacting with the State and the society, was not something predetermined; it was rather a political process gathering feminist forces from various political nuances and different organizational expressions, in a shared effort to create a political space to give voice to the Brazilian women in the national scenario. The presence of black feminists from the outset, and its organization as an external political subject was, for the AMB, a permanent positive tension in the light of the new matters this subject brings to the feminist thinking.

Forms of organization in the AMB

“Life comes in waves like the sea...”

In the self-articulation process of the AMB throughout history: Does it have elements indicative of a method we can recognize as founded in the feminist principles? Let us start by stating that there is a way of doing things in the AMB that is repeated and asserted all along. Yet, this form does not seem to have been created a priori, before the process itself. The very brief track record presented before shows how the decisions taken in rough times, in each juncture, progressively constituted a way of organizing, of working every day and of acting, which today appears as very characteristic of the AMB, although it also carries a number of difficulties.

The AMB is born with a pre-established objective and term. It was an articulation for Beijing. Its continuance is decided upon returning from the Conference, yet without any clear definition as to its existence, only its task is set out. There was already the idea that it was a space that 'gives a voice to women' in their diverse expressions. The lack of determination as to how this articulation should be and the decision of being a space for gathering the diversity of women articulated in movements seems to have served as the basis for constructing the way of being and of acting of the AMB today.

From the beginning, the AMB had no pre-established single political line or course; the idea was to guarantee the presence of the Brazilian women's movement in Beijing, then to monitor the results, followed by gathering all the movements in the preparation of the Feminist Political Platform, and ultimately to articulate all of them in order to bear an influence on the Conferences on Public Policies for Women convoked by the general government, and so it was. For these processes, the AMB's national coordination and the national political committee always understood the relevance of organizing preparatory documents, guidelines for debate and articulating discussions in all the states to build the power of its national presence. It is clear that in certain State Forums this was enriched by local debates, and in others the national reflection was not so tangible. This different situation often weakened the national performance of the AMB.

“The AMB has fluid forms of participation, its mobilization is propositive rather than normative and takes place by means of the communication, interaction and action of feminist movements that participate in it... The action priorities are built in participatory, decision-making processes and relationships, and are marked by the production of consensus in the action. The dialogue, articulation and free adherence are seen as the internal relationship method and the method of relationship with other organizations of the Brazilian and international women’s movement.” . This statement of the AMB reveals an intention in the way of organizing and constructing political actions. Let us see how it is developed at the level of decision-making spaces.

Decision spaces

The AMB founded the National Political Committee that includes representatives from the integrating State Forums, articulations, networks and groups. Participants may be confirmed or renewed in each meeting, as decided by their state organization, although most of them keep the same representatives. Meetings are guaranteed with financing projects made by the Executive Secretariat and/or the National Coordination for international agencies. These projects establish the cost of a representative from each state; each state has three representatives, who may participate in turns or participate collectively, depending on how much the State Forum manages to finance. The Political Committee also congregates representatives from the main similar networks, with whom the AMB articulates many of its guidelines; significant political debates take place quite frequently with the participation of feminists invited specially to these effects. The Political Committee establishes the annual priorities and the guidelines for the AMB’s plan of action.

The National Executive Coordination periodically appears among the members of the Political Committee, trying to add the idea of the representation of regions with national performance. Besides the Committee meetings, The Coordination has its own instances for gathering. Together with the Coordination there are Working Groups who work, some more than others, around priorities chosen in the plan of action, and formed by women of the political committee, and others that are added to contribute to that issue. Some examples of these working groups include: the WG on violence against women, the WG on global struggles, the I National Meeting Organizing Committee, etc.

From 2005 the AMB perceived the need to construct a broader space for feminist militancy in line with its way of acting and political guidelines: the National Meeting. The I Meeting, held in the city of Goiânia in December, 2006 gathered “feminist women from state spaces that constitute the political committee, members, allied women, contributors and sympathizers, who participate on their own behalf, registered individually or by the social movements or organizations where they act”.

The Chart of Principles of the I ENAMB (AMB National Meeting) clearly established the character that the coordination gave to the Meeting: “the AMB National Meeting is a plural and diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party space. Its methodology of construction and performance is oriented by the respect to diversity of the political expression and practices of feminism, the respect for the necessary articulation between the popular and academic knowledges existing among women, as well as by the commitment with the feminist critical reflection and the collective construction of knowledge”. The records made in this instance reveal how the Meeting managed to be an actual expression of the AMB, with the wide diversity of organizations and political guidelines that accompany the daily life of the State Forums, with a self aesthetic and a participative methodology that facilitated the dialogue between various knowledges and experiences, with a significant participation of women from popular groups – a majority in the Women’s Forum working permanently.

Inside and Outside Articulation

The AMB’s form of articulation is interwoven with its form of acting politically. The AMB organizes to act, constructs dialogue and commitment relationship to the inside, with the adherence of the Forums and other feminist organizations (ONGs, groups, academic congregations...) and also to the outside, building alliances with other feminist articulations and other social movements.

The self-construction process of the AMB, in being open, operating based on specific adherence and without strong pre-determined rules, stimulated the adherence of State Women’s Forums to their Political Committee, and fosters the adherence to the guidelines proposed. Still, for a long time, perhaps due to the weakness of the national instances and the infrequency of their meetings, the AMB was not a constant presence in the Forum’s everyday life. Some even still have the idea that the AMB is restricted to review the reports through the Forum representative in the Political Committee and to articulate the signature of any lobby document or to participate in any lobby actions over the government and/or the national congress. The sense of belonging of the forum members to the AMB is still not yet generalized in all the states, although it seems to have increased with the presence of many women in these spaces in this National Meeting.

The working groups that function together with the National Coordination were organized to facilitate the deepening and handling of the political priorities of the AMB, and also as a space for militancy for feminists who are not able to participate periodically in the State Forums, who act in NGOs, universities and make political-theoretical contributions to be added to the construction effort of the AMB, together with the members of the Political Committee. Yet they do not get to work satisfactorily; they articulate virtually due to the lack of resources for their meetings, and they act when some participants are individually invited to write contributions to one or other subject.

At present, the AMB's form of organization is a subject of discussion in the Coordination meetings, to further direct it to a national consultation. The National Consultation is an instrument of the Executive Secretariat and of the Coordination, addressed to the State Forums, whenever a specific controversial issue needs to be defined to provide continuity to the AMB's action. This consultation is carried out by electronic means, and the answers of the states must be based on the debates of the State Women's Forums, although in certain cases it is restricted to the participant in the Political Committee.

The guideline of the next national consultation on the form of organization includes the review of the composition of the national coordination which is currently based on regions; this has been evaluated and found devoid of a satisfactory operation. In spite of having a national coordination for each region, there is a low articulation with neighboring states for joint action and it is difficult to monitor the role of the coordinators chosen in each region. The form of organization and functioning of the Political Committee is also in discussion. There are different ways of understanding the presence of the related organizations; there are those who disagree with this presence and believe that it diminishes the power of the Committee, while others understand that this presence should be stimulated and broadened. It is also discussed the possibility that the AMB has adopted a federative character in becoming an articulation of the State Forums; this element would be contrary to its broad character of articulation of the diversity of women's movements, and would demand to capture regional and national movements in its space of articulation, thus adopting an organizational character of a network of social movements.

At this point, the AMB must also face the debate on the organizational-political autonomy of the constituent State Forums. This autonomy may generate or not the agreement to the international and national political guidelines proposed, thus bringing about risks and diffusions of power in key instances. On the other hand, there are reflections in the sense that the Forum's autonomy to support or not a political proposal gives rise to the AMB's power and mobilization capacity, based on its style of network and of active consensus-building, without any prior obligation around the national decisions .

State Women's Forums

The Women's Forums of the 27 Brazilian states, including the Federal District, integrate the AMB. They have a different name in each state: Forums, Networks, Centers or Articulations depending on the process of self-constitution in each place; this guarantees specificities and different ways of organizing and carrying out the women's struggles and the feminist debate at the local level. "The AMB does not require a particular structure or membership condition to join the Articulation; it may be whatever structure exists in that relevant place, with all its difficulties, possibilities and history. In some places the union movement has had special strength, while in others there is a prevalence of popular groups, sectors of the Church...etc."

The organization scheme of the forums is also diversified. There are forums articulated throughout the state territory, as in Para and Ceara, and others are limited to the capital cities and metropolitan areas. There are forums with few people and organizations and others with over 50 participating groups. Some forums are permanent and hold regular planning and evaluation meetings as well as periodic encounters for reflection to organize movement actions. On the other hand, other forums are active in specific times of the national movement like the International Women's Day on March 8 or the preparation of the National Conferences on Public Policies, for example.

There are forums strongly articulated around local priorities. Such is as the case of the Women's Forum of Pernambuco, devoted to the monthly vigil for the denunciation of violence against women. Others articulate locally around their own context and create debates about the possibility of a political project for the region, like the Forum of Amazonian Women of Para.

Some forums are immersed into the debate on violence (Pernambuco, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro...), many are involved with the health area (Goiás, Pernambuco...), and some deal with development issues, as in the case of the Forums of Espírito Santo, Ceara and Para. This information is not based on an objective data-gathering but rather on dispersed remarks by the interviewees; it indicates a diversity of local priorities that, considering the specific situation, may facilitate or hinder the acceptance of the national guidelines proposed by the Political Committee of the AMB.

"The diversity of organizations in the forums has been enriched with the return of debates and mobilizations. This means that they have mobilization power but with a degree of critical elaboration that boosts debates, actions and proposals... people come and go out of the forums, they come back when there arises an important issue, they collaborate with the elaboration of the meetings without attending them; some have a chart of principles, others don't...people belong to a forum out of a sense of duty, this is not a business where you can participate by simply placing a badge on your chest, this is a support space where to think and construct..." .



Feminist political action of the AMB

The general political reference for the National Executive Coordinator actions is still the Feminist Political Platform, a document drafted collectively by various Brazilian women's movements for the National Conference of Brazilian Women in 2002. Annually, the Political Committee and the National Office of the Articulation establish the political priorities of the year and the basis for the action plan that will be later elaborated by the Executive Secretariat and approved by the Coordination.

The Executive Secretariat consolidates this plan and generally drafts the documents necessary to support the priorities. Sometimes it assigns this task to a feminist as well as the electronic dissemination of the debate to the Political Committee and through it to the state Women's Forums. This kind of action is applied when it is deemed necessary to emphasize a priority problem or a specific action or when there arise new issues during the year. Upon major times of action, the Secretariat resorts to the "Political Agenda", an electronic instrument whereby the quick-reading ancillary texts and the orientations for the debate in the states are spread. Obviously, the degree of realization of this process varies depending on the state.

The priority political guidelines articulated - sometimes concurrently - are many. Some of them are more supported by the state Forums than others; therefore, some actions nationally articulated are stronger and are carried out in all states. For instance, the national call for a huge mobilization against violence which took place on March 8, 2007 and was marked by a 'whistling', was supported by all states. On the other hand, the mobilization for the political reform, also in 2007, had the active participation of just some of the state forums.

The Executive Secretariat works also with other two electronic communication and mobilization instruments: the Bulletin "Articulating Electronically", formerly a weekly bulletin and currently issued every two weeks, with 3 or 4 pages - also containing ancillary texts which are articulated to an internal section 'with-texts' - where feminist articles, notes and letters from social movements and other texts related to issues published in the Bulletin are diffused; the other electronic instrument is "Articulating Signature", which allows to collect signature from state forums, groups, movements, or from any interested women as a mechanism to consolidate the stance of the AMB and to lobby the public powers. In addition, there is "Articulating Among Us", an electronic instrument used by the Coordinator and/or the Political Committee for decision-making about some relevant issue.

When state forums strongly commit themselves to the confrontation of a problem, the Coordinator and/or the Executive Secretariat guide them by indicating local actions, the elaboration of pamphlets, and - to the extent possible - grant them some financial resources to fund the preparation of brochures, flags and other things necessary for the mobilization. According



to the way the action is developed, there are different pamphlets of the AMB for the same issue and in the same period, as well as diverse flags – prepared in the states –, all of them with the AMB acronym and with the same aesthetic pattern that marked the National Meeting; however they are different from each other. This diversity of forms of expression is analyzed positively by some coordinators as something consistent with the basic ideology of the AMB .

This way of articulating the political action, typical of the AMB, is expressed in specific experiences through priority struggles as the defense of public policies for women, the confrontation of violence against women, the defense of women's human rights in the social security, the reform of the political system and the articulation for abortion decriminalization.

Constructing a method

“one plus one is always more than two...”

The track record of the AMB and its way of organization and political action presented in the two precedent sections of this systematization allow us to perceive some elements in common among the different experiences described. This evidences a process to create its own methodology, seen a posteriori; yet it does not look like it was previously established as a

conscious decision of the Coordinator or the Political Committee, or that it can be regarded as a proposal already set. This systematization demonstrates that the AMB, in taking political-organizational decisions inspired by the same feminist principles throughout its history, constructed a way of doing politics that we will try to synthesize here based on the elements that constitute this action.

Some feminist elements and/or principles were adopted from the inception of the AMB and are the foundations of its decisions regarding its performance and action methodology. Let us see:

- The idea of giving space to women's voice in their different organizational expressions: popular groups, NGOs, academic groups, women not related to organizations, women organized in various social movements. This takes place through procedures appropriate for this purpose, from the promotion to self-organization of forums up to guidelines for debates and systematization of proposals.
- Strengthening autonomy and self-organization of women: from the outset, this premise is based on the AMB's way of articulation that takes into account the differences and specificities of local organizations. For the feminism, autonomy is not voluntarism or individualism but a criticism to the centralized and hierarchical way of organization and the capacity of carrying out a collective action with the strength of the articulated movement.
- To guarantee the participation of the diversity of organized women: black, lesbian, young, rural and urban women. This is a manifest intention; however, the presence of women's organizations in the AMB is still mostly urban and the reference of its constituent organizations is not that of each women's segment (black, lesbian women, etc.) but rather the state Forums. In turn, these forums gather this diversity of organizations and movements connected to specific women's situations. Other form of promotion is to convoke the national organizations of the women's movement to the Political Committee meetings, as the AMB encourages and supports the organization of the diverse women's expressions as a political subject and that is why it involves the articulation of rural and domestic workers, black, lesbian and unionist women, etc. The AMB also works based on the idea that there exists a common experience in being a woman that can unite us around political actions; that is why the AMB proposes guidelines that can influence life conditions of most women.
- Feminist critical analysis on women's issues. This element is present from the selection of priorities, based on the analysis of the economic and political juncture, to the construction of issues and arguments for the debate and the way of acting before the state and the society regarding such problem. Apparently, this critical capacity is, however, not so common within the group of activists of the AMB but it is permanently subsidized by the Coordinator, the Executive Secretariat and by feminists who are called to contribute, problematizing some priority issues both at the national level and in the states.

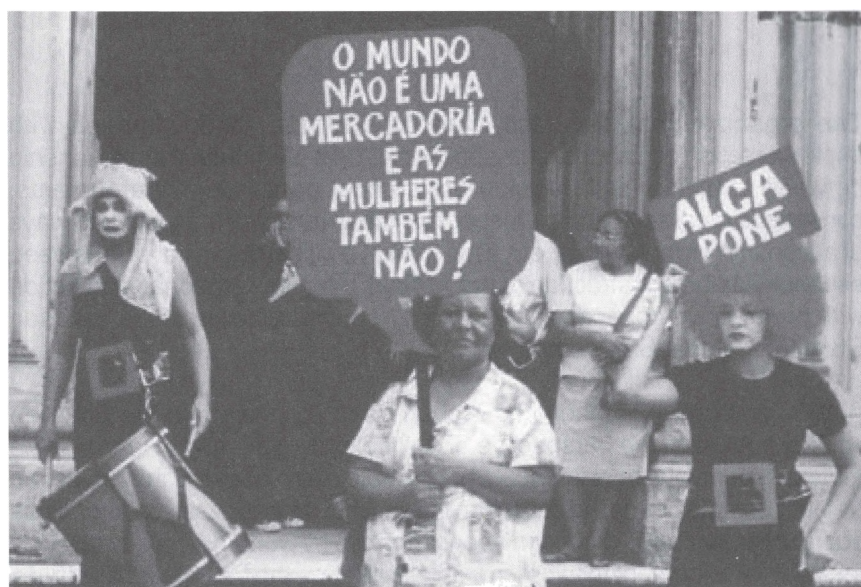
- Adherence to political guidelines proposed by the AMB, generating consensus in action. According to this perspective, national decisions, -though taken in the Political Committee with representation of all state forums or in the Coordinator with representation of all regions- are not considered by the State Forums and/or its constituent groups as an obligation to do. Adherence is decided in the State Forums' debates, which also establish the degree of emphasis to be put on the mobilization. This facilitates a committed participation in the construction of national processes, but it also gives rise to difficulties when there is a new issue and there is no background of debates in the local forums and organizations; this method can also cause the absence of strong commitment around the issue at the national level.
- Constant mobilization and communication work. The political articulation by the AMB is based on the proposal and argumentation around concerns, with the driving force of communication instruments, mostly electronic, in view of the exiguous financial resources, but with publications in paper, if possible. The nature of the AMB's communication of the AMB is political, in favor of the movement and promotes the adherence and the diversity of local action forms of performance. At the same time, it is a space of diffusion of feminist arguments and elaborations supported thereby.
- Feminist political training. The various interviews performed underscore the relevance of creating own spaces of feminist political training based on experience exchange, reflection, theoretical analysis and on the elaboration of strategies for action. Although at this time there is a process of national training on violence against women in different contexts, this is not a constant feature in the AMB; there is still no consolidated formulation with regard to what a training internal policy would be about.

Process recovery: constructing a model

The idea of autonomous adherence to the political guidelines in order to autonomously generate consensus in action is a strong element of this methodology that is being constructed during the life of the AMB. Throughout its history, a model for the development of political processes and the carrying out of self-organization was created. This model involves some steps:



1. Formulation of the problem and its establishment as the priority for the AMB's political action. This is carried out in the Political Committee and/or the Coordination, though many times it is proposed by the Executive Secretariat.
2. Grounds of the problem from the critical analysis and the construction of political stances, arguments and strategies for its confrontation. This debate is performed in meetings and seminars and/or with ancillary texts drafted by feminists of the Coordination, the Working Groups and/or by coworkers and members of the feminist organizations or colleagues of the women's movement.
3. 'National Consultation', if applicable, or dissemination of the 'Feminist Political Agenda'. Material with theoretical-political contributions, national action strategies and orientations for debates and/or public actions in the local level on the problem. In addition, this item includes other orientation materials as the print publications, for example, of the specific magazine for Conferences 'Articulating the Feminist Struggles in the Public Policies'.
4. 'Articulating Signatures' circulates nationally when it comes to collecting signatures for a specific proposal. This happens simultaneously with the political articulation, communication or mobilization actions by the state forums in the capital cities and principal cities of the states, according to the women's movement situation in the relevant state. This instance may consist of sending lobby messages to the National Congress or to any other body of the Executive Power or an 'undersigned document' in paper that goes to every group and is used in actions to gather support.
5. Local actions articulated nationally. This is a recent modality of action that consists of establishing a national day of mobilization around a certain issue; on this day there are different kinds of mobilizations and diffusion actions organized by the State Forums in each locality. At this time, diffusion materials are prepared taking into account national orientations: clothes, pamphlets, flags, music CDs, speeches for recordings that circulate in loudspeakers, etc. Some examples include actions for abortion decriminalization, actions for putting an end to violence against women, participation in the 'Cry of the Excluded' with a national letter on the elections, etc.
6. Articulated national action. It consists of national actions developed from national processes, which integrate the AMB's coordination and the participation of the State Forums, varying in accordance with the degree of adherence of the forums to the fight or the political process. Some examples are the AMB's participation in the WSF processes, in the Conferences on Public Policies, in the process of social participation for the preparation of the PPA – Pluri-Annual Plan of the federal government, the construction of the Parallel Forum for Social Security, the mobilization around the Platform for Political Reform, etc.



Reflecting on our experience

This model under construction is probably originated in the feminist principles of self-organization, autonomy and horizontality that establish the form of articulation to the inside and to the outside, as a relationship between political subjects. The contradiction between organizational autonomy and freedom of political action, on the one side, and the need for actions and decisions nationally articulated in a country with Brazil's geographical proportions to face the situation of inequality, on the other, seems to be a productive tension in the sense of avoiding the risk of centralization, while stimulating the AMB's action as a national social movement in front of the state and the Brazilian society, an specially with regards to the social movements. This method, associated with the action of other national organizations of the women's movement has enabled to situate women in the national public arena based on their own ideas and actions.

Actions of the women's movements – particularly of the AMB – have been marked by a blunt criticism to the form of structuring of the Brazilian society, based on the capitalist and patriarchal system. From the elaboration of the Feminist Political Platform, the AMB works to create awareness of the fact that race, class and gender inequalities are interwoven with the production of a life situation that establishes very complex interdictions to women's autonomy, that range from the difficulties to speak in public and to reflect on their own experiences to the possibility of traveling in their own city and of self-organizing in the autonomous movement. This is why it becomes essential for the construction of the feminist movement to create spaces where we, women, have the possibility to reflect, build political stances, articulate actions and establish relations with other social movements in the construction of transformation processes.

The organizational perspective adopted by the AMB, although with implementation difficulties, presupposes certain elements: the relationship between subjects, self-decision adherence, generation of arguments, consensus created in action, respect for the diversity of subjects and ways of action and organizations, etc. This form of political organization has been essential for the construction of the AMB as a feminist national articulation with progressive advocacy power over the public policies of the Brazilian State for materializing women's rights.

AMB's feminism has innovated in the issues it presents to the Brazilian society both from the perspective of symbolic struggle and in terms of the material conditions of existence. An example of the above is the regulation on labor unprotection in the debate on the security reform, based on arguments about unremunerated domestic labor performed by women. While it demands the right for retirement for women in informal labor, the movement questions the social legitimization of the sexual division of labor.

The experience of organizing the AMB as a social, feminist and anti-racist movement of a national character permanently demands the "coherence between the intention and the gesture", i.e., between the principles it disseminates and the method or organization and political action. Surely, this is not always achieved as desired, as we intend to prove; yet, the intention of maintaining the firmness of principles and the flexibility in day-to-day action has been the way to continue giving voice to women as a political subject of the Brazilian society ♦

1 Carmen Silva, teacher of SOS CORPO Feminist Institut for Democracy. Recife, September, 2007.

2 Bulletin of I ENAMB – National Meeting of AMB, December 7 – 10, 2006, Goiânia – GO.

3 States, in this case, refers to federation units.

4 Interview of Guacira César de Oliveira and Schuma Schumacher.

5 Interview of Maria Betânia Ávila.

6 Preparatory document for the I ENAMB.

7 National articulations of the organizing committee of the National Conference of Brazilian Women: ANMTR – National Articulation of Women Rural Workers (today: MMC – Rural Women's Movement), Articulation of Brazilian Black Women's NGOs, Secretariat for Women Worker's Issues of CONTEE, National Committee on Women Worker of CUT (Today Secretariat), National Women's of PSB, Radio Women's Network, National Network of Traditional Midwives, Feminist National Network on Health, Sexual and Reproductive Rights, and UBM – Women's Brazilian Union.

8 Interview of Maria Betânia Ávila

9 On political area of social movements see SILVA, Carmen: "Identidade, ONGs e campo político dos movimentos sociais". Recife, SOS CORPO, 2005.

10 "Um Pouco da Nossa História". In: Document of the I National Meeting of the AMB, December 7-10, 2006. Goiânia – GO.

LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS

Document of the I ENAMB – National Meeting of AMB. Goiânia, Dec, 2006
“Vídeo Conferência Nacional de Mulheres Brasileiras”. DF, 2002.
“Sistematização do monitoramento sobre violência contra a mulher”. Website of the AMB: www.articulcaodemulheres.org.br
“Sistematização sobre o apitaço”: Ferreira, Verônica and Santos, Joana. Recife, SOS CORPO, 2007.

LIST OF INTERVIEWED PERSONS

1. Guacira César de Oliveira - DF
2. Schuma Schumacher - RJ
3. Maria Betânia Ávila - PE
4. Silvia Camurça - PE
5. Analba Brasão ferreira - RN
6. Nelita Frank - RO
7. Graça Costa – PA
8. Marta Cezária - GO
9. Maria Lúcia Lopes de Oliveira (Malu) – PB
10. Joana Santos – PE

11 Interview of Silvia Camurça.

12 Document of the I National Meeting of the AMB, December, 7-10, 2006, Goiânia – GO.

13 Chart of Principles of the I ENAMB – National Meeting of the AMB, December, 2006.

14 Information obtained from the Office of the National Coordination, Recife, June, 2007.

15 Records of the National Executive Coordination of the AMB. Recife, June 16, 2007.

16 Information contained in this section of the systematization were obtained from interviews to Marta Leiro, of the Women's Forum of Salvador-Bahia; Nelita Frank, of the Women's Group of Roraima; Graça Costa, of the Women's Forum of Amazonian Women of Para; Analba Brasão, of the Women's Forum of Rio Grande do Norte; Maria Lucia (Malu) Lopes de Oliveira, of the Women's Network of Paraíba; Joana Santos, of the Women's Forum of Pernambuco; Beth Ferreira, of the Women's Forum of Ceara and Marta Cezária, of the Women's Forum of Goiás.

17 Interview of Guacira César de Oliveira

18 Interview of Guacira César de Oliveira.

19 Demonstrations used the whistle in order to make noise jointly as a denunciation of the violence against women and as to attract the attention of the public power.

20 Records of the National Coordination. June, 2007.

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Foto: Lena Heartley, the Last Surviving Offspring of John Dunn







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